

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA LIBRARY



0 0002 0681 094

Ex LIBRIS
UNIVERSITATIS
ALBERTAENSIS





Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2017 with funding from
University of Alberta Libraries

LI

LITERATURE
AS EXPLORATION

PROGRESSIVE EDUCATION ASSOCIATION
COMMISSION ON HUMAN RELATIONS

ALICE V. KELIHER, *Chairman*

EDNA ALBERS

WILLARD W. BEATTY

EARL S. GOUDEY

LEO HUBERMAN

WALTER C. LANGER

LORINE PRUETTE

LOUISE M. ROSENBLATT

W. ROBERT WUNSCH

Collaborators

GLADYS C. SCHWESINGER

BERNHARD J. STERN

KATHERINE W. TAYLOR

LITERATURE AS EXPLORATION

By LOUISE M. ROSENBLATT

For the

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RELATIONS



A PUBLICATION OF THE
PROGRESSIVE EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

D. APPLETON-CENTURY COMPANY
Incorporated
NEW YORK LONDON

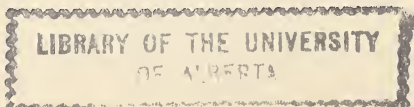
COPYRIGHT, 1938, BY
D. APPLETON-CENTURY COMPANY, INC.

*All rights reserved. This book, or parts
thereof, must not be reproduced in any
form without permission of the publisher.*

410

Copyright, 1937, by the Progressive Education Association

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



PREFACE

Many teachers of literature feel themselves to be somehow outside the sphere of present-day intellectual ferment, in which the experts in the natural and social sciences seem so clearly to have a part. My aim in this book is to demonstrate that the study of literature can have a very real, and even central, relation to the points of growth in the social and cultural life of a democracy.

The enjoyment of literature remains as ever the source from which all its other values spring. If we are to help young people to come fully into their literary heritage, of which we are the trustees, we must cleave to this sense of literature as first of all a form of art. Yet one of the wonders of art is its multiplicity of powers; the literary work, even as it gives pleasure, may be fulfilling many other functions. Viewing literature in its relations to the diverse needs of human beings, this book will seek to answer the questions: "How can the experience and study of literature foster a sounder understanding of life and nourish the development of balanced, humane personalities?" "How can the teacher minister to the love of literature, initiate his students into its delights, and at the same time further these broader aims?"

The dangers to be avoided are, on the one hand, the tendency to treat literary works merely as sociological documents or moral tracts and, on the other hand, the

“purely esthetic” point of view. This essay attempts to show that such extremism is untrue to the nature of the literary experience itself, in which artistic sensitivity and human understanding are interdependent and mutually necessary.

Since the varied powers of literature cannot be confined within a single phrase, the title of this book should be understood as a metaphor, not as a limiting definition. The word *exploration* is designed to suggest primarily that the experience of literature, far from being for the reader a passive process of absorption, is a form of intense personal activity. The reader counts for at least as much as the book or poem itself; he responds to some of its aspects and not others; he finds it refreshing and stimulating, or barren and unrewarding. Literature is thus for him a medium of exploration. Through books, the reader may explore his own nature, become aware of potentialities for thought and feeling within himself, acquire clearer perspective, develop aims and a sense of direction. He may explore the outer world, other personalities, other ways of life. Liberated from the insularity of time and space, he may range through the wide gamut of social and temperamental alternatives that men have created or imagined. Part of my task will be to outline some of the realms into which the reader may thus penetrate, and to sketch some of the personal and social benefits that may flow from such literary discovery.

Much of value has been written in recent years to remind us that literature deals with human personalities and human problems. The tendency, however, has been

to center the attention on books themselves, and to be content with analyzing the particular problems or social conditions treated in specific books. But the social influence of literature rests on a broader base than merely its portrayal of problems or conditions. Of greater social and artistic significance are the habits of mind, the general approach to other people and to life, the fundamental concepts about human nature and society, that are engendered by the experience and study of literary works. We need to find out what happens when specific human beings, with their interests and anxieties, participate in the emotional and intellectual life that books make possible. We need to know what human insight, what knowledge, what habits of mind, will enable our students to attain ever richer literary satisfactions, and to derive from them the equipment to embark on increasingly fruitful explorations of literature—and of life. Problems such as these, and their application to actual teaching processes, will be treated in the coming pages.

In short, this book seeks to present a philosophy for teachers who desire to help young people to gain the pleasures and the understanding that literature can yield. Since my method has been to develop first one and then another of the multiple implications of a many-faceted problem, no one chapter can stand alone or can be assumed to formulate a complete program for literature study. Each phase of the discussion has been thought of as organically related to every other phase. The core from which they all radiate is a belief in the living and personal nature of all literary experience, all teaching,

and all learning. I have attempted to keep in the center of attention certain human pictures: the student reading a book, immersed in the world it conjures up, or the student, his classmates, and the teacher interchanging ideas about it.

Dr. Keliher has expressed the deep appreciation which I share with the other members of the Commission on Human Relations for help that has been given us. It is possible here to add my personal thanks to only a few among the many who have given me criticism and advice. Mr. Lawrence K. Frank, whose emphasis on the importance of the arts is one of his many contributions to the humanization of contemporary educational thought, read the entire manuscript and offered many valuable criticisms and suggestions. Professor Emery Neff also criticized the complete book in the light of his wide literary knowledge and insight. Mr. John Marshall made many penetrating comments on the tentative version of Parts One and Two. I should like also to express my warm appreciation of Professor I. A. Richards' kindness in sending me from China, in these troubled times, a most illuminating discussion of those first two sections of the book. My obligations to his pioneering published works in this field will be mentioned in later pages.

I wish that I might more fully express my gratitude to the following who, as teachers and scholars, contributed extremely helpful criticism on all or part of the book: Professor Hoxie N. Fairchild, Professor Lou L. LaBrant, Mr. Maxwell Geismar, Professor W. Wilbur Hatfield,

Professor Clare Howard, Professor Harold Goddard, Miss Mabel Foote Weeks, Professor Ruth Benedict, Professor and Mrs. J. Bartlet Brebner. I am grateful to Miss Julie Heller for invaluable help in preparing the manuscript. For my view of the social sciences, I owe much to my work in anthropology with Professors Franz Boas and Ruth Benedict, and to innumerable discussions with Dr. Margaret Mead. Mr. Sidney Ratner has given me the benefit of his knowledge of philosophy and the social sciences, as well as unceasingly generous encouragement and advice. My debt to my father's lifelong concern for social values cannot be adequately acknowledged.

Thanks are also due the many members of the 1937 Summer Workshop for Teachers of the Progressive Education Association who drew on their teaching experience for advice on Parts One and Two. I am indebted to Professor Harold Gray for some clarifying discussions. Teaching records generously made available to me by Dr. Edith M. Everett and, through the coöperation of Miss Beatrice Doerschuk, by Mrs. J. Bartlet Brebner, Mrs. Carl Raushenbush, Dr. Anita Marburg, Dr. Henry Ladd, and Mr. Maxwell Geismar, encouraged me to more forcible statement of my convictions concerning certain problems. A very discerning and stimulating communication from Professor Howard Mumford Jones also led me to elaborate various points.

Association with all my fellow members of the Commission on Human Relations has been most gratifying. Miss Edna Albers' valuable assistance and suggestions de-

serve special thanks, however. I should like also to express my gratitude for Dr. Alice V. Keliher's inspiration and encouragement.

I owe a special debt to the many students at Barnard College who during the past ten years have helped me to arrive at the view of the teacher's opportunities presented in this book. My hope is that it may serve my fellow-teachers as the starting point for a further coöperative working out of our problems.

L. M. R.

FOREWORD

The Commission on Human Relations has been charged with the responsibility of helping young people with the urgent problems of personal and social living today. As one of its activities, the Commission is offering to students, parents, and teachers, a series of books which deal with questions of human relations in our society. It is our hope that the insights, the points of view, and the data offered in these volumes will to some extent contribute to a more satisfactory meeting of the demands of actual living.

Literature as Exploration is addressed primarily to teachers of literature in high schools and colleges. The author's clarification of the relation between literary appreciation and social understanding has relevance, however, for any teacher who seeks to illuminate human experiences. Today, teachers in the social studies, in home economics, in psychology, in guidance, and in many other fields, are turning to literature for materials that reveal the problems of human life. Dr. Rosenblatt, through her work in sociology and anthropology, as well as in her own field, as Instructor in English at Barnard College, Columbia University, is especially well equipped to help teachers extend such use of literary materials.

The initial plan for a series of books in human relations evolved from the conferences of the Hanover Group

called together by Lawrence K. Frank. This group included Lura Beam, John Dollard, Earl T. Engle, Mary Fisher, Willis Fisher, Hugh Hartshorne, Robert Lynd, Mark A. May, Margaret Mead, and James Plant. The outlines and source materials planned by these members of the Hanover Group were given to the Commission to serve as a starting point for its activities. For their generous release of original materials and for their continuing interest and assistance in the work of the Commission, we are deeply grateful.

The Commission and the author wish to thank the publishers and authors who gave permission to quote from their publications. Specific acknowledgments will be found in the footnotes.

ALICE V. KELIHER, *Chairman*

CONTENTS

PREFACE	v
FOREWORD <i>Alice V. Keliher</i>	xi

PART ONE

THE PROVINCE OF LITERATURE

CHAPTER	PAGE
1. THE CHALLENGE OF LITERATURE	3
2. THE LITERARY EXPERIENCE	32

PART TWO

THE HUMAN BASIS OF LITERARY SENSITIVITY

3. THE SETTING FOR SPONTANEITY	69
4. WHAT THE STUDENT BRINGS TO LITERATURE.	91
5. BROADENING THE FRAMEWORK.	129

PART THREE

LITERARY SENSITIVITY AS THE BASIS FOR HUMAN INSIGHT

6. SOME BASIC SOCIAL CONCEPTS.	149
7. PERSONALITY	214
8. EMOTION AND REASON	265

HINTS FOR FURTHER READING	329
-------------------------------------	-----

INDEX	333
-----------------	-----

Part One

THE PROVINCE OF LITERATURE

I

THE CHALLENGE OF LITERATURE

12.1: Social Values + the Aesthetic

IN AN unsettled world, our schools and colleges are confronted with the demand that they prepare the student directly for living. He must be helped to develop the intellectual and emotional capacities for a happy and socially useful life. He must be given the knowledge, the habits, the flexibility, that will enable him to meet unprecedented and unpredictable problems. He needs to understand himself; he needs to work out harmonious relationships with other people. Above all, he must achieve some philosophy, some inner center from which to view in perspective the shifting society about him; he will influence for good or ill its future development. To have pragmatic value, any knowledge about man and society that schools can give him must be assimilated into the stream of his actual life.

Nor does the student require preparation only for some future way of life. Even during his school years, he is very much part of the larger world, meeting the impact of its social and economic troubles, adjusting to adults who bear the marks of its successes and failures, discovering the possibilities it holds open to him. As he

plays his minor youthful rôle now, he is creating the personality and ideals that will pattern his later major rôle as an adult. Young people themselves are asking everywhere, "What do the things that we are learning in school and college mean for the life that we are now living, or are going to live?"

We teachers of literature have been too modest concerning our possible contribution to these demands. Our task, we have felt, is to make our students more sensitive to the art of words, to initiate them into the pleasures and the knowledge that our literary heritage offers. What we have to provide has appeared rather a refuge from brute reality. We could, it seemed, leave to others those more mundane preoccupations; we had enough to do in busying ourselves with purely esthetic concerns.

When it has been urged that our teaching have some practical relation to the pupil's immediate human concerns, we have pointed to the horrors of the didactic and moralistic approach to literature. With decided justification, we have opposed any tendency to make of literature merely a handmaiden of the social studies or a body of documents illustrating moral points or sociological generalizations. The Victorians demonstrated the sterility of seeking in literature only moral lessons. In reply to the pragmatic critics of education, we have recalled the danger of again subjecting the study of literature to this arid point of view. Those who see literature in such terms, we have insisted, reveal their blindness to the special nature and primary value of the literary experience.

Yet when the literary experience is fully understood,

it becomes apparent that we teachers of literature have indeed been somewhat short-sighted. We have not always realized that, willy-nilly, we are constantly affecting the student's sense of human personality and human society. We, more directly than most teachers, are constantly inculcating in the minds of our students general ideas about human nature and conduct, definite moral attitudes, specific psychological and sociological theories, and habitual responses to people and situations. Preoccupied with the major aims of our particular field, we are often not conscious of the fact that we are dealing, in the liveliest terms, with subjects and problems usually thought of as the province of the sociologist, the psychologist, the philosopher or historian. Moreover, we are proffering these attitudes and theories in their most easily assimilable form, as they emerge from personal and intimate experience of specific human situations, presented with all the sharpness and intensity of art.

The teacher of literature will be the first to admit that he deals inevitably with human relations, with the experiences of human beings in their diverse personal and social relations. The very nature of literature, he will point out, enforces this. For is not the subject-matter of literature everything that man has thought, or felt, or created? The lyric poet utters all that the human heart can feel, from joy in "the cherry hung with snow" to the poignant sense of this world "where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies." The novelist sets forth the intricate web of human relationships with their hidden pattern of motive and emotion. He may

paint the vast panorama of a society in a *War and Peace* or a *Human Comedy*. He may follow the fate of an entire family as in a *Forsyte Saga* or a *Buddenbrooks*. He may show us a young man coming to understand himself and life, grappling with his own nature and the society about him, as in *Of Human Bondage* or *The Way of All Flesh*, or he may lead us to share in the subtle moods and insights of men and women, as in *The Ambassadors* or *Remembrance of Things Past*. The writer of stories catches some significant moment, some mood, some clarifying clash of wills in the life of an individual or a group. He gives us the humorous tale of a *Rip Van Winkle* or a revelation of character, such as Chekov's *The Darling*, or the harsh image of hate and frustration in Wharton's *Ethan Frome*. The dramatist builds a dynamic structure out of the tensions and conflicts of intermingled human lives. He may use the comic incongruities of social conventions and human affectation, as in *The Rivals*, or he may create a somber symphony out of man's inhumanity to man and the inscrutable whims of fate, as in *King Lear*. The joys of adventure, the delight in the beauty of the world about us, the intensities of triumph and defeat, the self-questionings and self-realizations, the pangs of love and hate—indeed, as Henry James has said, “all life, all feeling, all observation, all vision”—these are the province of literature. No matter what the form—poem, novel, drama, biography, essay—literature makes alive and comprehensible to us the myriad ways in which human beings meet the infinite possibilities that life offers. And

always, in books, we seek some close contact with a mind uttering its sense of life. Always too, in greater or lesser degree, the author has written out of a scheme of values, a sense of a social framework or even, perhaps, of a cosmic pattern.

No matter how much else art may offer, no matter how much the writer may be absorbed in solving the technical problems of his craft, in creating with words new forms of esthetic experience, the human element cannot be banished, even if one should wish it. Thus, a writer such as Gertrude Stein, who is preoccupied with technical innovation, will have lasting value only as she suggests to other writers new means of conveying emotions and a sense of the flow of life. The most sophisticated reader, extremely sensitive to the subtly articulated qualities of the poem or play or novel, cannot judge its technical worth except as he assimilates, too, the substance which embodies these qualities. Even the literary work that seems most remote, an imagist poem or a whimsical fantasy, reveals new notes in the gamut of human experience or derives its quality of escape from its implicit contrast to real life.

Santayana has summed up this basic appeal of literature: ¹

The wonder of an artist's performance grows with the range of his penetration, with the instinctive sympathy that makes him, in his mortal isolation, considerate of other men's fate and a great diviner of their secret, so that his work speaks to them kindly, with a deeper assurance than they

¹ George Santayana, *Reason in Art* (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1924), pp. 228-229.

could have spoken with to themselves. And the joy of his great sanity, the power of his adequate vision, is not the less intense because he can lend it to others and has borrowed it from a faithful study of the world.

Certainly for the great majority of readers, the human value, the human experience that literature presents, is primary. For them, the formal elements of the work—style and structure, rhythmic flow—function only as the medium through which is communicated the experience the author wishes to convey. The reader seeks to enter into another's experience, to glimpse the beauty and intensity that the world offers, to fathom the resources of the human spirit, to gain understanding that will make his own experiences more comprehensible, to find molds into which to pour his own seemingly chaotic experiences. The teachers of adolescents—in high school or in college—know to what a heightened degree they share this personal or “human” approach to literature.

These pictures of life, these images, too, of what is good and beautiful and true, are, moreover, experienced through literature with an immediacy and emotional persuasiveness unequalled by practically any other educational medium. Will it be President Madison or Rip Van Winkle who will remain more vividly and personally in the student's memory? Will it be the grain production of the Middle Western states or Garland's *A Son of the Middle Border*? Will he remember longer the statistics about New England's shipping or Melville's *Moby Dick*? Will the theory of the inferiority complex be more vivid or Jane Austen's Mr. Collins?

Will he recall the figures concerning the distribution of wealth or Clyde Griffith's envy of his rich cousins in *An American Tragedy*? Will the provisions of the Fourteenth Amendment or Mark Twain's Huck Finn and Nigger Jim affect him more? Which will be more meaningful, the data concerning the change from home to factory manufacture or *Silas Marner* and *Mary Barton*?

We do not intend to depreciate the analytic approach represented by the social sciences. Indeed, it is the aim of this book to make their value to us, as teachers of literature, more apparent. Rather, we should feel that we, too, play a social rôle, since the literary materials with which we deal are a potent means of forming the student's images of the world in which he lives, a potent means of giving sharpened insight into human nature and conduct.

ALL THIS IS OBVIOUS, the English teacher may remark. We deal inevitably with the complexities of human relationships in our teaching. But the teacher will not so readily admit that, in the process of elucidating book or poem or play, he is, with equal inevitability, taking some sort of attitude toward the human relations and human problems presented. Yet, consciously or unconsciously, explicitly or implicitly, the teacher of literature is helping to inculcate particular views of human nature, particular ethical or social philosophies.

It will be objected that the inculcation of any definite psychological theories or ethical codes is entirely alien to the English teacher. Our aim, it will be claimed, is to

help our students understand what they read, to help them develop some critical discrimination, to acquaint them with the history of literature, and to give them some insight into literary forms. Surely, this seems to have nothing to do with teaching them specific psychological or sociological theories.

The answer is that when we most sincerely seek to fulfil these primary aims, we find ourselves inevitably dealing with materials that at least imply specific psychological theories and moral and social attitudes. As soon as we recall the very obvious fact that literature involves the whole range of human concerns, we are reminded that it is impossible to deal with literature without assuming some attitude toward these human materials. Moreover, because our implied moral attitudes, our assumptions, our unvoiced systems of social values, are reinforced by all the electric intensity and persuasiveness of art, we should bring them out into the open for careful scrutiny.

We English teachers will be extremely scrupulous concerning the scholarly accuracy and balance of our statements about literary history, or the soundness of the standards of literary excellence we inculcate. Our training in normal school, college, and graduate school has been mainly directed toward developing competence along these lines. But how often do we stop to scrutinize the scholarly accuracy or scientific basis of the views concerning human personality and society that insinuate themselves into our work? How often have we consciously and critically worked out the ethi-

cal criteria that are implied by the judgments passed on literature, and incidentally, on life? How often, even, are we aware of these ever present, implied generalizations concerning man and society? While we have lavished thought and attention on the more historic aspects of our work, we have taken these other things for granted and have accepted them as a by-product that requires no special thought or preparation.

WHAT, THEN, ARE SOME OF THE WAYS in which our teaching does impinge on problems that we usually associate with the concerns, for example, of the psychologist or sociologist? A review of the accepted practice in literature classes in school and in college—and, indeed, of much literary criticism as well—would reveal an amazing amount of attention given to topics which could be classified under the heading of psychological theorizing. Since the vivid creation of living characters makes up so large a part of the novelist's, the dramatist's, the biographer's art, it is obvious that an understanding of their work implies an attempt to understand completely the characters they present. How can we read *Hamlet*, *The Return of the Native*, or *Pride and Prejudice*, without such a preoccupation with the personalities whose lives they help us to share?

The student, therefore, is often asked to define the nature of the particular characters in the work that he has been reading. He is encouraged, too, to see some causal relationship between motive and action: To what influences did Macbeth respond? What were the

causes of his immediate success and final failure? What can explain Lady Macbeth's early determination and later breakdown? What was the influence of the characters upon one another in *Silas Marner*?² We do not need the abundant evidence of textbook and teachers' manual to know that such questions will arise. After reading *Hamlet*, the high-school student, as well as the Shakespearean authority, usually turns to theorizing about the rational and irrational elements in human behavior. Conrad's *Lord Jim* flings us into the midst of the problems concerning the effect of a sense of guilt and failure upon personality. The teacher, moreover, is usually careful to lead the student to become sensitive to the evidence of changes in character that the author sets forth. This would certainly be true in the case of such works as *Ethan Frome*, *The Forsyte Saga*, *Huckleberry Finn*, *The Rise of Silas Lapham*, not to mention such perennial texts as the novels of George Eliot or the plays of Shakespeare.

Othello may serve to illustrate how impossible it is for us to avoid committing ourselves to some definite assumptions, once we embark on anything approaching a discussion of characters. The attempt, for instance, to understand Othello's rapidly aroused jealousy, to square that with his nature as it is displayed at the opening of the drama, and to see why his jealousy should have led

² Illustrations will often be drawn from widely used texts. We shall later (Chapters 4, 7) discuss whether, from the point of view of students' needs and interests, the usual reading lists are well chosen. When examples are drawn from the college level, the conclusions based on them apply equally to the high-school level.

so unswervingly to murder, may take a great many forms. Of course, there is a means of evading all these problems by maintaining that the psychological consistency of Othello's character is merely a theatrical illusion. Professor E. E. Stoll contends that any psychological interpretation is merely superimposed upon a series of incidents, actions, and speeches that were dictated by dramatic tradition and theatrical needs for the sole purpose of creating a convincing and exciting play, without any concern for subtle psychological consistency. Even accepting these arguments, we shall still find it necessary to explain why Othello gave the impression of being a living, integrated personality and not a mere series of theatrical effects. In thinking back over our experience of the tragedy, we shall find that we have fitted what the dramatist offers us into some preconceived notions about human behavior, about the extent of human credulousness or the effects of jealousy. We shall judge whether Othello is a credible character in the light of our own assumptions concerning human nature.

The fact is that the genius of Shakespeare has succeeded in giving us the *illusion* that we look on at the fate of living creatures. What they do and what happens to them will make sense for us in terms of our own particular understanding of human motivation. For instance, it would have been almost impossible a generation ago for a high-school student to have made the relationship between Hamlet and his mother the core of her interpretation of his actions, as a young girl did re-

cently. Whether she was aware of it or not, or whether or not she had even heard the name Freud, it is obvious that she had absorbed, somehow, somewhere, certain of the psychoanalytic concepts. Similarly, in an interpretation of *Othello*, the students may show an extraordinary diversity of theoretical frameworks. One student may emphasize the details offered by the dramatist concerning Desdemona's and Othello's sense of racial difference and may base on that his explanation of Othello's readiness to believe in his wife's infidelity. Another student might make out a case for Othello as an example of a man fundamentally insecure, unsure of his ability to hold Desdemona, and thus ready to believe himself betrayed. Another student may react purely in terms of moral judgment and may see Othello's problem as the struggle between the nobler and the baser elements in his nature, the latter winning momentarily in his condemnation and murder of Desdemona. There will also be the student who will accept the characters' statements concerning the reason for their acts, who will assume that everything they do is consciously willed, and who will pass judgment accordingly.

These varied assumptions concerning human nature will be present even if one gives the class the information of which Mr. Stoll reminds us, namely, that in Elizabethan dramas, it is often a convention that the husband believes at once in his wife's guilt. The students have experienced the illusion of looking upon life itself and have interpreted it in their own terms. Mr. Stoll will do us the great service of saving us from im-

puting to Shakespeare interpretations which are merely our own. We nevertheless must face the basic assumptions of those interpretations. Even though the teacher will not feel it necessary to pass judgment on all of the psychological systems implied in the students' reactions, he will at least feel the responsibility of leading them to scrutinize the basis for their psychological assumptions.

In most cases, both the teacher and the student are under the illusion that they are merely clarifying or elaborating the author's understanding of his characters and his particular view of human motivation. If it were possible for the teacher not to intrude any direct or indirect comment on these theories, the effect would still be implicitly to approve of the particular conceptions of each author studied. This could result only in the student's being subjected to a series of contradictory or inconsistent notions concerning human behavior. He would be left confused, ready to become a victim of some prejudice, either arrived at capriciously or absorbed from repeatedly heard platitudes. Obviously, we want to help him to understand the author's view of his characters. But the student needs also some means of evaluating it.

Complete objectivity on the part of the teacher is, moreover, impossible. It would be very hard not to reveal, in some way or other, something of his own enthusiasms or antipathies—through tone of voice, type of discussion, length of time devoted to the work, or emphasis upon one aspect rather than another. Without realizing it himself, the teacher will undoubtedly con-

vey attitudes of approval or disapproval toward different authors' philosophies of human behavior. One work will be discussed with more zest than another. When the book happens to reënforce the teacher's own view of things, the implications of the author's presentation of character will be emphasized more vigorously. *Wuthering Heights*, though introduced to the students as a great novel, may, nevertheless, not be presented with the same aura of enthusiasm and approbation as, let us say, *Adam Bede*.

There are even more basic ideas concerning human character that the teacher will convey. In the reading of works of the past—Homer, the Arthurian legends, *Beowulf*, Elizabethan drama, or Victorian novels—there again arises a very important psychological problem: What are the basic human traits that persist despite social and cultural changes, or to what extent are the resemblances of one age to another, as well as the differences, due to environmental influences? Indeed, this question of persisting or "universal" human traits is one that arises constantly in discussion of literature. For instance, the English curriculum recently suggested by the National Council of English Teachers entitled one of its sections on literature "Studying Human Nature."³ That phrase *human nature* recurs again and again in the discussion of books, and always the manner of its use conveys a great many unformulated implications.

³ W. Wilbur Hatfield, Ed., *An Experience Curriculum in English*, English Monograph No. 4, National Council of Teachers of English, (New York, D. Appleton-Century Co., 1935), p. 50.

What, for instance, shall we make of such questions as the following, appended to a textbook version of *David Copperfield*?

How is human nature shown at its best?

How is human nature shown at its worst?

One passage in this chapter shows David beginning to read human nature correctly. Where is it?

What baseness of human nature is revealed by different persons in this chapter? What goodness of human nature?

The assumption here seems to be that there is something fixed and unchangeable, a certain number of fixed notes within a given scale, that can be called human nature. Yet the very term *human nature* is itself a highly controversial one. Although it enters very readily into any discussion of literature, how often do we feel impelled to face squarely our own conception of its meaning? Nevertheless, we do have some set of notions that dominates our sense of human nature, and through our discussion of particular characters and particular works, we are constantly building up in the student's mind a predisposition toward such a set of ideas. No matter how much we seem to be concerned with discussion of some one character in some specific situation, there will be interwoven with it one or another undeveloped theory of psychological motivation. "These are the significant elements in human personality; these are the kinds of forces that dominate men's lives and lead them to act in certain ways," are the generalizations constantly implied in discussion of specific characters. We cannot emphasize too much that it would be impossible for the

teacher, even if he desired it, to evade transmitting certain generalized concepts concerning character and the ways in which it is molded.

THE ELEMENTS INVOLVED in an understanding of human behavior are, therefore, ones that the teachers of literature should investigate thoroughly. Within recent years, in the fields of psychology, sociology, and anthropology, great strides have been made toward at least a clarification of the fundamental problems. The layman's tendency to speak of "human nature" as though it were constant and unchanging has been searchingly questioned; the plasticity of the human creature has been discovered to be almost endless. Anthropologists have revealed to us societies in which human beings have suppressed or rigidly regulated some of the drives, such as sex or the desire for self-preservation, that we tend to consider most fundamental and ineradicable. In these societies, human beings act in ways that seem to us "unnatural"; their motivation seems incomprehensible to us—and therefore not quite "human." Our whole tendency, of course, is to equate human nature with the particular motivations, modes of behavior, and types of choice that we have from childhood observed in the society about us. These traits and ways of behavior seem inherent in human nature itself. The inescapable molding influence of the particular environment and culture into which we are born is a concept difficult to master but extremely important as a basis for any intelligent thinking about the problems of human beings in our own society.

Certainly it is a subject that the teacher should have clearly in mind before discussing questions concerning character and motivation, or even before introducing the student to the images of human behavior presented in our own and other literatures.

The danger is that we may unquestioningly adopt the general attitudes toward human nature and conduct that permeate the very atmosphere in which we live. Unfortunately, those ideas which are taken most for granted are often the ones that merit the most skeptical scrutiny. The notion that the conscious motives of the individual are the ones that really determine action is, for instance, implied in most casual discussions of behavior. Yet present-day psychology stresses the importance of the unconscious factors motivating behavior. A classroom discussion of essays, letters, journals, autobiographies, as well as all the other forms that deal with individual conduct, automatically creates the necessity for furthering one or the other of these views. What the teacher does not say, or the skepticism that he fails to arouse, will be just as definite a means of reënforcing the usual attitude as if the teacher were consciously or deliberately fostering it.

An equally basic approach to human behavior which still dominates the average man's thinking is the old voluntaristic psychology. This assumes that man's conduct is, in largest part, due to his own volition. If man transgresses, it is because he has willed it; the problem of praise and blame is thus a simple one. On the whole, this is the attitude with which the average student will

approach literature. Again, whether he wishes or not, the teacher will, of necessity, either reënforce or counteract these assumptions. He will increase the hold of this view of human nature or replace it with a keener sense of the complexity of human motivation and with a broader understanding of the many environmental, physiological, and involuntary psychological factors that influence behavior. Even those writers who, themselves, may not have consciously held this broader view, have nevertheless often given us descriptions of the significant environmental and physiological factors that may explain their characters' personalities and actions. The teacher either does or does not make the student aware of the possible causal relationships between such things. In either case, he is helping to determine the student's sense of these questions.

Despite our desire to leave these issues to the specialists in psychology, we evidently must resign ourselves to the fact that we cannot avoid encroaching upon these extremely important and interesting questions concerning human behavior. The problem lies not in this fact, however, but rather in the fact that the average teacher or college instructor in literature is not necessarily equipped to handle these topics in a scientific spirit. The result tends to be rather that the discussion of characters and motivation follows the superficial lines of ordinary, everyday conversations about people. The students may thus very easily absorb the idea that on the basis merely of one's own meager experience, one may make valid judgments on human na-

ture and conduct. The instructor must offer, therefore, as a check or corrective framework, some knowledge of the dominant conceptions in contemporary psychology.

THE TEACHING OF LITERATURE involves with equal inevitability the conscious or unconscious indoctrination of ethical attitudes. It is practically impossible to treat in a vital manner any work of fiction, and indeed, one might say, of literature in general, without becoming involved in some problem of ethics and without speaking out of the context of some social philosophy. The ideal personal and social goals that man sets for himself, the values to be sought in any of the innumerable relationships between people, or between the individual and society, in short, a framework of values, is essential to any discussion of human life. In most cases, the concern with specific episodes or characters may veil the fact that these generalized attitudes are being conveyed. Yet any specific discussion necessarily implies the existence of these underlying attitudes.

We all are aware of the average student's tendency to pass judgment on the actions of characters encountered in fiction. This tendency is, of course, fostered by the voluntaristic psychology we have just mentioned. At any rate, it is obvious that when the student has been really moved by a work of literature, he will be led to ponder on questions of right or wrong, of admirable or anti-social qualities, of justifiable or unjustifiable actions. Sometimes this tendency is furthered by the type of analysis and discussion of literature carried on in the

classroom. An authority on English teaching who works with teachers throughout the country reports that "scores of high-school teachers encourage *debates* on such questions as: 'Was Shylock justified?' 'Was Hamlet mad?' 'Was it wrong for Godfrey to keep his secret?' " Although undoubtedly the practice of many teachers is superior to the level represented by the suggested questions in textbooks and literary histories, the extraordinary number of such questions that ask the student to pass judgment is indicative of typical tendencies in teaching practice. There can be no doubt as to the influence of questions such as those appended to a reputable edition of *The Scarlet Letter*:

Which in your opinion is the guiltiest of the three: Hester Prynne, Arthur Dimmesdale, or Roger Chillingworth? Which suffered most?

What characters do you consider admirable? Why?

There is little in that first question to suggest to the student that perhaps we should not judge guilt at all in the situation so poignantly set forth by Hawthorne. The question rules out the point of view that would seek not to pass judgment, but to understand how the whole tragic complication grew out of the way of life in that Puritan community. The question rules out, too, the interpretation of this novel as a study in the effect of a sense of sin on character.

Certainly, the teacher of literature will be exerting an important social influence through his success or failure in making the student self-conscious and self-critical concerning this tendency to pass judgment.

Given the strong pressure toward such snap judgments in the ordinary influences acting upon the student, it is particularly incumbent upon the teacher to make the student aware of how often judgment should be deferred until the hidden source of motivation or the special circumstances surrounding the action are understood. Our approach to literature should be dominated by the desire to understand before attempting to pass judgment.

Surely, it would be impossible, as well as absurd, to attempt to eliminate from our concern with literature all ethical considerations. First of all, the author himself seeks to make us sympathize with, and to value, one character more than another, one type of choice in life more than another. We should be doing neither literature nor the student a service if we tried to evade these issues or tried to foster a tendency never to come to any conclusions concerning right and wrong. Our task is rather to face squarely the fact that we shall in one way or another be helping to form the student's system of values. This will lead us, first of all, to scrutinize our own ethical criteria, which must necessarily color anything that we say or do in the classroom. It will lead us also to realize that we must not foist upon the student our own particular bias, but must help him to achieve for himself a rich and humane moral philosophy.

Thus far, we have mentioned only those ethical and psychological assumptions that seem to deal exclusively with the more personal elements in the field of human relations. The nature of literature, as of life itself,

should remind us, however, that we shall find ourselves equally involved with considerations that are usually thought of as the special concern of the historian, the economist, and the sociologist. This has already been suggested by what we have said concerning the influence of environment on behavior, but that may seem too theoretical an approach. Perhaps we should test this generalization in the light of a more usual phrasing concerning the aims and the material involved in the teaching of literature.

Let us say that our object is to acquaint the student with the pleasures of tales of adventure, or novels of vigorous action and courage, in strange and exotic settings. We may suggest that he read, for instance, *Ivanhoe*, *The Count of Monte Cristo*, *The Last of the Mohicans*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, *Mutiny on the Bounty*, or *Northwest Passage*. In these books, certainly, the student's attention will be focused upon adventure and the interest of the foreign scenes. Yet it is clear that there will creep in various considerations that we might classify as historical or sociological. The teacher will find it necessary to clarify some of the different social ideas and ethical codes represented by such books. Scott's novels, for instance, will involve an understanding of the historical periods treated. They may also very likely require an explanation of the early nineteenth-century moral code which Scott brought to bear upon his pictures of these periods. Just as we have suggested earlier in connection with such works as the *Iliad* or Elizabethan dramas, there may arise the need to make clear

that in different ages and in different parts of the world man has created extraordinarily dissimilar social, economic, and political structures which pattern the life of the individual in ways very different from our own.

Social and historical considerations enter even more obviously into the study of any period of literature or the chronological treatment of any form such as poetry or the drama. In presenting these materials, the teacher consciously, and probably even to a greater extent unconsciously, will be impressing upon the minds of the students various notions concerning historical problems; he will be transmitting various positive or negative assumptions concerning the influence of social and political circumstances upon other phases of man's life. The process of social change (of which literary change is but one aspect), the influence of technological conditions upon the social and intellectual life of a society, the various factors that lead men in one age to be obsessed by very different aspirations from those of another age—such problems are necessarily implied by any survey of the history of literature. Even by seemingly ignoring them, the teacher is affecting, though in a negative way, the student's ability to understand these problems. Yet these are concepts which the social scientist is also attempting to clarify.

And what shall we say about attitudes toward personal relationships? Here even more obviously, the rôle of the teacher of literature is clear. Think, for instance, of all of the problems concerning the proper relationship between husband and wife, the desirable patterns of

family life, the images of the desirable mate, that are necessarily raised by the reading of such works as *The Idylls of the King*, *Dombey and Son*, *A Doll's House*, *Ann Veronica*, and *The Forsyte Saga*. Or consider the attitudes toward the child and questions of relations between parents and children, implied in the reading of many of Wordsworth's poems, *The Way of All Flesh*, *Tom Sawyer*, *David Copperfield*, *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*, and *Clayhanger*.

The young people to whom we introduce these and the other works of literature are slowly building up their sense of the socially favored types of adjustment in our culture. In books they are meeting extremely compelling images of life that will undoubtedly influence the crystallization of their ultimate attitudes. Here again, the teacher will exert an influence through the whole framework of ideas and attitudes which he builds up around the experience of the particular sense of social relationships presented by any particular work.

We need not extend this recital of the social attitudes and problems with which a concern with literature is intimately associated, for it would lead us to cover the whole range of choices and aspirations and values out of which the individual must weave his own personal philosophy. If we were to wander into a school or college library and take at random from the shelves literary works which the students are urged to read, we should find that they offer the student not only the sense of beauty but also in almost every case, some approach to life, some image of people working out a common fate,

or some assertion that certain kinds of experiences, certain ways of feeling or acting, are valuable. The teacher must, first of all, be aware of the fact that this absorption of social attitudes is a necessary and precious phase of the experience of literature; he will be led, then, to investigate his own rôle in this process; he will realize that he, himself, is playing an active part in it. All that we said earlier concerning the many subtle ways in which the teacher influences the student's assimilation of psychological theories applies even more clearly to the student's assimilation of social attitudes.

HOW QUICK WE TEACHERS OF LITERATURE would be to condemn the teacher of history or zoölogy who interlarded his discussions with dogmatic statements about literature, or even worse, instilled into his students' minds fixed attitudes and preconceptions concerning literary experience. How unscholarly we should think the zoölogy instructor who felt that what he had absorbed about literature from the general atmosphere, from newspapers and magazines, and perhaps from a random course at college, justified his passing on the merits of Milton's poetry or his insinuating that free verse was a ridiculous innovation. How absurd it would seem if he should feel competent to throw out casual judgments as to the authorship of the disputed passages in *Sir Thomas More*. Yet too often we ourselves feel that the social concepts and attitudes absorbed from everyday life, plus a scattered reading on a subject here and there, or a rapid survey of the field in a college

course, are ample preparation for our using literature as the springboard for discussions of human nature and society. We are forced, of course, to the rejoinder that the very nature of literature necessitates such discussions; we cannot evade these matters by judicious selection. But this merely lays us open to the accusation of having failed adequately to equip ourselves to handle a vital and inevitable phase of our teaching.

Probably the comparative youth and lack of unanimity of the social sciences explain in part our irresponsible encroachment upon their territory. We long ago assimilated a more respectful attitude toward the point of view and general concepts of the natural sciences. We should feel the English teacher grievously lacking who propagated in his classroom the idea that the sun moves around the earth (cf. *Paradise Lost*, Book Eighth), or that incantation was the approved method of curing the sick. From a "purely esthetic" point of view, which ignores the fact that the person experiencing the work of literature comes to it out of a particular world and will return to it, this may not matter. One could appreciate many literary works just as well "esthetically" though holding these exploded beliefs. The fact is, nevertheless, that the student will return to the world of today. His literary experience will have been crippling or destructive, rather than helpful, if he brings from it ideas that are relics of an outgrown past.

If this is true concerning the materials of the natural sciences, how much more true is it of the need for scrupulousness concerning psychological, social, and

ethical concepts that the student will absorb from his reading! Hence the need to build up in the student a discriminating attitude. Just as he will be able to read and enjoy Milton's *Paradise Lost* without necessarily accepting Milton's cosmology, so he must be able to absorb from the literature of the past and of the present what is sound and relevant to his own needs in this age in which he lives. Is it not possible to help the student to a zestful reading, let us say, of Walter Scott and yet to give him a sense of the anachronism, particularly for an American, of an unquestioning acceptance of Scott's feudalistic philosophy? The "literature teacher" may not be primarily concerned with giving scientific information; still it is his responsibility to further the assimilation of ideas and habits of thought that will be conducive to social understanding. He shares with all other teachers the task of providing the student with the proper equipment for making sound social and ethical judgments.

Indeed, the English teacher will undoubtedly play an especially important part in this process, since it is very likely that the student's social adjustments will be much more powerfully influenced by what he absorbs through literature than by what he learns in the usual impersonal and theoretical social-science courses.⁴ This point, which we shall develop more fully in Chapter 7, makes even more imperative a concern with the phases

⁴ This argument cuts both ways, of course. Everything that we have said leads to the conclusion that literary materials have their place also in the social-science curriculum.

of literature teaching that we have emphasized in this chapter.

The already overburdened literary scholar, aware of the great mass of materials and information that he must absorb, will probably indignantly demand whether he is now being called upon to assimilate also the great body of knowledge accumulated by the social sciences. Certainly, we do not contend that the prospective teacher of English should be given the complete training demanded of the social scientist. This would be impossible in most cases. It does seem imperative, however, that enough of the dead lumber of English training, in normal school, college, and graduate school, be eliminated so that leisure is left for building up a sound acquaintance with at least the general aspects of current scientific thought on psychological and social problems. And practising teachers must feel the necessity for constantly increasing such knowledge. They cannot neglect to establish a rational basis for this inevitable and highly important phase of their influence.

It has been our purpose in this chapter to demonstrate how intimately the materials of human relations—psychology, social philosophy, and ethics—enter into the study of literature. But this is not the complete picture. There are still many problems to be clarified. We now must go on to work out the relation between this much neglected aspect of our work and the more widely recognized concerns of English teaching.

We have been suggesting considerations that are most often stressed by those who espouse the “social ap-

proach" to literature. Unfortunately, the champions of this view, in a pendulum-swing reaction against extreme estheticism, have sometimes been led to neglect the fact that literature is a form of art. The defenders of "esthetic values," on the contrary, have often felt it necessary to reject any social interpretations. It is our thesis that no contradiction should exist between these two phases of art—that, in fact, they are inextricably interrelated. Those who see in literature only social documents and those who admit only so-called pure esthetic values offer equally limited insights. The increase of literary sensitivity, no less than the fostering of social awareness, requires a concern for the issues raised in this chapter. Our aim in this book is to further the development of more fruitful understanding and appreciation of literature through a philosophy of teaching based on a balanced recognition of the many complex elements that make up the literary experience. Rejecting any limiting approach, we shall center our attention on literature in its living context. We shall find that, though the social and esthetic elements in literature may be theoretically *distinguishable*, they are in actuality *inseparable*. Much of the confused thinking about the esthetic and the social aspects of art would be eliminated if the debaters would realize that an object can have more than one value: It can yield the kind of sensuous and emotional fulfilment which we call *esthetic*—it can be enjoyed in itself—and at the same time have a social origin and social effects. The task of the coming chapters will be to make this point clear and to elaborate its implications for the reader and the teacher.

2

THE LITERARY EXPERIENCE

Strengthens the Reader

TERMS such as *the reader*, *the student*, *the literary work*, have appeared in the preceding pages. Actually, these terms are somewhat misleading, though convenient, fictions. There is no such thing as a generic reader or a generic literary work; there are in reality only the potential millions of individual readers of the potential millions of individual literary works. The novel or poem or play exists, after all, only in interactions with specific minds. The reading of any work of literature is, of necessity, an individual and unique occurrence involving the mind and emotions of some particular reader. We may generalize about similarities among such interactions, but we cannot evade the realization that there are actually only innumerable separate responses to individual works of art.

The teacher of literature, above all, needs to keep a firm grasp on the central fact that he is seeking always to help specific human beings—not some generalized fiction called *the student*—to discover the pleasures and satisfactions of literature. The teacher's job, in its fundamental terms, then, consists in furthering a fruitful in-

involves
mind +
emotions

transactional
experience
seen as
dynamic &
as having
infinite possibilities
re response

terrelationship between the individual book or poem or play and the individual student. The teacher is dealing with a necessarily fluctuating and dynamic problem. His material is no less than the infinite series of possible interactions between individual minds and individual literary works.

That fundamental fact explains why the English teacher does not have a systematic, neatly packaged, unchanging body of information to impart. Few subjects, if any, offer anything as easily manageable as that, but certainly of all the subjects being taught in our schools and colleges today, literature lends the least comfort to the teacher who seeks the security of having a clearly defined body of information to hand on. He does give "knowledge," of course. There are even those reassuring things, facts—facts about the conditions under which literary works were written; facts about the social, economic, intellectual history of the age in which they were written; facts about the way contemporary readers responded or did not respond to them; facts about the author and his life; facts about the literary traditions which he inherited; facts, even, concerning the actual form, structure, and method of the work. Yet all of these facts are merely secondary and peripheral. Indeed, such facts are even distracting or worthless unless it is very clearly seen that they are secondary; their function is to help to clarify and enrich individual experiences of specific novels, poems, or plays.

It is this interaction between the reader and the book—a process that may be compared to the interaction of

facts " are secondary to primary / personal response

relationship
between R &
has social
origins and
social effects.

common base
of experiences
variation
differences

two complex chemical compounds—upon which the teacher must center his attention. A discussion of this process of interaction, which we name the *literary experience*, will enable us to map out some significant phases of our problem for consideration in later chapters. We shall later, for example, be concerned with the fact that both elements in this relationship have social origins and social effects. If every author were completely different from every other human being, and if each reader were totally unique, there could, of course, be no art (and no communication) at all. There are many things that we all share in common—birth, growth, love, death—things, that is, to which we can apply certain general labels because of some common core of experience, even though there may be infinite personal variations upon them. Similarly, in spite of personal differences, human beings are a part of particular social systems and tend to fall into groups—age, sex, profession, nation, race. These again offer general patterns upon which individual variations can be played. We shall later see how pervasive these forces of social conditioning are, even in the determination of specific emotional drives and intellectual concepts.

Just as the personality and concerns of the reader are largely socially acquired and socially patterned, so the literary work, like language itself, is the result of the fact that man is a social being. The importance of literary tradition and the crystallization of particular literary forms and techniques of communication is in no way denied by our insistence on the psychological na-

ture of any specific literary experiences. Anything that we do learn about these general social factors, however, must eventually be brought to bear upon actual literary experiences. Hence, the essential consideration at this stage of our inquiry is that anything we call a literary experience gains its significance and force from the way in which the stimuli present in the literary work interact with the mind and emotions of a particular reader.

At the very outset we must recognize that it would be unfortunate if the literature teacher should look upon books only as a series of documents illustrative of various psychological, sociological, or philosophical problems. This will not happen if the teacher is motivated by the idea set forth above, that any values to be derived from literature must emerge from a personal, esthetic experience of the works themselves. We are not advocating that the teacher forage through the fields of literature seeking those works that will permit little homilies on life. Our contention rather is that any good literature—the body of works already accepted as part of our rich heritage or the works being produced today that possess a similar authenticity—potentially offers this increased awareness of human values and increased understanding of human relations.

In the past the danger has been that one aspect or the other of the literary experience has been emphasized. On the one hand, literature and art deal with and minister to human life and human needs. On the other hand, these ends are accomplished through the means of artistic form, through the exercise of literary crafts-

what
a literary
experience
is

Values
derived
from li
come from
the
aesthetic
exp. of
the work

author
success the
ie
creates
thing
he
is a new
ment of
science in
where
hasn't
vorously
een

manship creating works of high esthetic appeal. To treat literature merely as a collection of moralistic pamphlets, a series of disquisitions on man and society, is to ignore the fact that the artist writes out of a particular literary tradition and is concerned not with indirect commentary on life but with the addition of a new element of experience in life by means of the creation of something that has not existed before, namely, a work of art.

When the concern with the human elements in literature has become confused with the purely practical approach to those elements in life itself, distortion and critical confusion have followed. Literary works have been judged solely in terms of their conformity to practical standards and current conventional aims. Such an approach made possible the elevation of the novels of the now unread Miss Yonge over those of a George Eliot or an Emily Brontë. This approach is possible only when the nature of literature as an art is forgotten.

When, on the other hand (usually as a reaction against the preceding point of view), only the formal and technical elements of the work have been considered important, an equally disastrous distortion has resulted. An excessive preoccupation with the externals of form and technical brilliance, such as Oscar Wilde illustrates, has led to a similar breakdown of sound critical standards. The very remoteness of a work from the living core of human emotions and preoccupations has come to be considered a merit. The literary craftsman has been elevated above the true artist.

next
reading

To lead the student to ignore one or the other of the

elements of his experience is to cripple him for any vigorous and fruitful understanding of what literature offers. It is incumbent upon the teacher of literature to maintain a clear grasp upon the complex nature of the true esthetic experience.

WHAT, THEN, CAN WE LEARN about what happens in the mind of the reader of literature? What goes on in the student's mind as he reads something suggested by the teacher? Through the medium of words, the writer attempts to bring into the reader's consciousness certain concepts, certain sensuous experiences, certain images of things, people, actions, scenes. The special meanings and, more particularly, the submerged associations that these words and images have for the individual reader will largely determine what the work communicates to him. The reader brings to the work personality traits, memories of past events, present needs and preoccupations, a particular mood of the moment, and a particular physical condition. (The extent to which these are socially determined will, it has been said, be a later topic for discussion.) These, and many other elements, interacting with the peculiar contribution of the work of art, produce a unique experience. We must be constantly aware of the living and unstereotyped nature of the reading experience, made up as it will be of many complex elements in a never-to-be-duplicated combination. This is a concept especially important for the teacher of adolescents. In their case, the experience of any work is further specialized by the fact that they have not yet arrived at a con-

Reader

The reader's mind

① images
concrete
concepts② meaning
associations
made
R's exp. base③ what R
brings to
text

sistent view of life and probably have not yet achieved a fully integrated personality.

Another factor which adds to the variability of the situation with which we must deal is the great diversity in the nature of the literary works themselves. There is a decided difference between the emotional satisfactions to be derived from a lyric by Sir Philip Sidney and a lyric by Browning; an even greater diversity of appeal is made by works of different literary type and mood, such as *The Old Wives' Tale* and *As You Like It*. Obviously, very different kinds of sensitivity and knowledge are required for the fullest appreciation of what each of these works offers. The infinite diversity of possible literary works plus the complexity of human personality and background explains further our insistence on the special and personal nature of the literary experiences we seek to foster. Our aim is to develop in the student the capacities necessary for a rich fulfilment through literature. We need to keep in mind the wide range of sensitivity and understanding that we have therefore engaged ourselves to help our students to acquire.

Our first chapter emphasized the fact that a concern with literature generally implied psychological and sociological considerations; it can now be seen why we reiterate that *we are dealing with such insights as they flower from the experience of works of art*. Grammar and syntax are involved in any literary work, yet no one would mistake a novel for a treatise on grammar. One should be just as careful to avoid the confusion of seeming to discuss literary works as though they were treatises

st
types
literary
experiences
be pro-
ed by
ing the
res
it.
to dev.
ents
ivity for
lit.
xp.
ivity
understanding
transaccional
part of
teacher.
transaccional
model (method) +
transaccional
model (philosophy)
which approach
is "sympiotic"
experiences
is goal

on sociology or psychology. The crux of the matter is that the poem or play embodies stimuli toward a special kind of intense and ordered experience—sensuous, intellectual, emotional—out of which social insights may arise. In the following discussion, our aim is to avoid the confusion that so often results from a fixation either on something called pure art or on the social implications of literature, cut off from their roots in personal esthetic experience. All phases of the individual's response to literature—sensuous or "formal" as well as social—must be considered in their inseparable relations to one another.

The more clearly we understand the nature of the literary experience, the more apparent it becomes that the considerations suggested in the preceding chapter are by no means alien to our concern with literature as an art. Philosophers, to be sure, have defined the esthetic experience in a great many ways. Often they have been concerned with fitting art into previously developed metaphysical systems, or they have emphasized one out of the many springs of esthetic enjoyment. The play impulse, the instinct of imitation, the desire for self-expression, the desire to communicate, the religious impulse, are some of the numerous aspects of man's nature that have been suggested as the source of his desire to create and enjoy art. This is merely further documentation of our feeling that art satisfies a great many different human needs and impinges upon the broad range of man's personal and social concerns.

In our everyday lives, preoccupied as we are with

Poem:
a culmination
of the
sensuous
the intellectual
the emotional

all response
to be considered
& appreciated
in their
entirety
it wholes
not parts

many
responses

accomplishing some task or attaining some goal, we must often ignore the quality of the moment as it passes. Life presents to us a confused mass of details from which we select for attention only those that have definite relation to our practical concerns. Even then our attention is focused not on the details themselves, but on their practical bearing. We usually cannot stop to savor their quality. In our approach to a work of art, on the contrary, our attention is centered precisely on the nature and quality of what is offered us. In fact, one of the principal characteristics of the esthetic experience is that the attention is focused definitely on the work of art itself. Our sense of it may later have repercussions in actual life, but as we see the play or read the novel or poem, we are intent on the pattern of sensations, feelings, concepts, it evokes. Because the literary work is organized and self-contained, it concentrates our attention and regulates what will enter into our consciousness. Our business for the moment is as fully as possible to apprehend these sensations and concepts in relation to one another. Out of this arises a sense of an organized structure of perceptions and feelings which constitutes for us the esthetic experience.

Definitions of the esthetic experience often indicate that art provides a more complete fulfilment of human impulses and needs than ordinary life, with its frustrations and irrelevancies, can give. Such a sense of fulfilment and emotional equilibrium is undoubtedly in large part the result of the intense, organized, and coherent nature of what is apprehended through the work

relates
sensations,
egs, &
gets it
thes.
"apprehend
as they
produced
response to
text.

the of
er's
possibility
to be aware
enough to grab
hold of the
reactions as they
occur.

Reader must
have capacity &
readiness.

of art. Yet we must remember that these definitions refer to the ideal esthetic experience; they are concerned with the sense of perfect fulfilment that art potentially can give. Such definitions tend to obscure the special nature of each individual experience, no matter how complete, of a work of art.

We who are engaged in the actual task of developing sensitivity to a particular art form will not need to be reminded that any such consummate experience depends not only on the work itself, but on the reader's capacities and readiness. The explanation of the esthetic experience in such ideal or absolute terms is valuable only as it helps us to understand how to utilize what happens when a particular student with all his special interests, blind spots, and sensitivities encounters a particular work of art. Sound literary insight and esthetic judgment will never be taught by imposing from above our ideas about what a work should mean. We have to become aware of some of the things that actually affect the student's reactions; then we shall be able to help him to understand them and to achieve ever more balanced and more rewarding literary experiences.

*Teacher
task to
develop
sensitivity*

WHEN IN THE COURSE OF OUR DAILY AFFAIRS we exclaim "How funny!" or "How tragic!" we have engaged in an embryonic artistic process. We have seen a pattern, a sequence in human life; we have juxtaposed certain events in our minds, have perceived their relationships, and have thus disengaged their humor or tragedy. The author does this in a more completely creative form. He

*reaction to
life prepares one
for reaction to
literature / text.*

not only sees a certain pattern; he enables us also to share his vision. (No one would question that in the creation of the literary work the writer does not merely passively reflect experiences as through a photographic lens. He uses his command over words to convey to us an impassioned insight.) This has been the selective force at work. Discarding all else, the writer weeds out from the welter of impressions with which life bombards us those particular elements that have significant relevance to his insight. He leads us to perceive selected images, personalities, and events in special relation to one another. Thus, out of the matrix of elements with common meaning for him and his readers, he builds up a new sequence, a new structure, that enables him to evoke in the reader's mind a special emotion, a new or deeper understanding—that enables him, in short, to communicate with his reader.

Just as the author is creative, selective, so the reader also is creative. Out of the interaction between what the author presents and the reader's own personality, his own fund of past experiences, may come that moment of balanced perception, a complete esthetic experience. But it will not be the result of passivity on the reader's part; we have been careful to speak of the literary experience in terms of an interaction between the reader and the work. Moreover, as in the case of the artist's creative process, there will be selective factors molding the reader's response. It is a mistake to speak of the experience of a book or a play or a poem, without reference to the context of that experience in the mind

of the reader. He comes to the book from life. He turns for a moment from his direct concern with the various problems and satisfactions of his own life. He will resume his concern with them when the book is closed. There is every reason to believe that even while he is reading the book, these things are present as probably the most important guiding factors in his experience of it.

We all know that the same book will have a very different meaning and value to us at different times in our lives or under different circumstances. Some pleasant or unpleasant state of mind, some worry, some temperamental bias, or some contemporary social crisis may make us either especially receptive or especially impervious to what the work offers. Without an understanding of the reader, one cannot even vaguely predict what particular book may be significant to him, or what may be the special quality of his experience of it. Hence, it is important to go on to consider some of the selective factors that may mold the reader's response to literature.

Meaning
derived
from life
will vary
temporally

The reader turns to literature to seek a great variety of satisfactions. These, sometimes quite conscious, demands are in themselves important factors affecting the interrelation between book and reader. This was demonstrated recently by an incident in a freshman class at a New England woman's college. The girls were unexpectedly asked the question, "Why do you read novels, anyway?" Here are some of the spontaneous answers:

my
ad?
I like to read a novel for relaxation after I have been studying hard all day.

I like to read anything that is well written, in which the author gives you interesting descriptions and exciting adventures.

I like to find out about the things that happen to people, and how they solve their problems.

I had an interesting experience with a novel a few weeks ago. I discovered that one of the characters was in the same fix that I was in. I got a great deal from seeing how the character in the book managed.

I like to read about as many different kinds of situations as possible—just in case I, myself, might be in such a situation some day.

These students, in rather simplified form perhaps, summarized a number of the personal satisfactions that the adult reader, as well as the adolescent, seeks from literature. Their remarks paralleled somewhat de Maupassant's comment:

The public as a whole is composed of various groups, whose cry to us writers is:

"Comfort me."

"Amuse me."

"Touch me."

"Make me dream."

"Make me laugh."

"Make me shudder."

"Make me weep."

"Make me think."

And only a few chosen spirits say to the artist:

* "Give me something fine in any form which may suit you best, according to your own temperament."

In its simplest terms, literature may offer us an emotional outlet. It may enable us to exercise our senses

more intensely and more fully than we have otherwise time or opportunity to. Through literature we may enjoy the beauty or the grandeur of nature, and the exotic splendor of scenes in far distant lands. Furthermore, it may provide experiences which it would not be either possible or wise to introduce into our own lives. The love of action and adventure, the interest in kinds of people and ways of life alien to our own, the delight in scenes of strong emotion, in pictures of physical violence, in images even of hatred and evil, may be due to the opportunity they give for ridding ourselves of culturally repressed emotional tendencies. Nor does literature afford an outlet only for the anti-social emotions. A great work of art may provide us the opportunity to feel more profoundly and more generously, to perceive more fully the implications of experience, than the hurried and fragmentary conditions of life permit.

The college girls, bearing out the contention of our preceding chapter, placed greatest emphasis on literature as a means of broadening one's knowledge of people and society. This reflected their adolescent curiosity about life, a curiosity they share with their younger brothers and sisters in high school. And for the average adult reader as well, literature contributes to the enlargement of experience. We participate in imaginary situations, we look on at characters living through crises, we explore ourselves and the world about us, through the medium of literature.

One of the most precious of our human capacities is that of sympathizing with or identifying ourselves with

aesthetic
different

the experiences of others. Scientific studies of reactions to works of art and particularly of literature have revealed how pervasive is our tendency to identify with something outside ourselves. This has been found to be true even of non-human subjects. We tend to feel ourselves into the tree that is swaying in the wind, until the successful artist will have somehow made us that very tree itself. Even the delicate poise of an architectural column or the symmetry of a Greek vase will be felt in the pull and balance of our own muscles, though we may not consciously be aware of the source of our pleasure. How much more directly and completely is this tendency to live ourselves into the object of our contemplation fulfilled when we are concerned with the personalities and joys and sorrows, with the failures and the achievements, of authors or characters in literature!

This tendency toward identification will certainly be diverted in one direction or another by the nature of our temperament and our own needs and preoccupations at the time we read. We may be so obsessed by our own problems and the demands of our own nature that our impulse will be to seek in the works we read those characters and those situations most like our own. Through them, we may seek to attain the satisfactions or the balanced vision, or perhaps merely the unequivocal motives, that we have been unable to attain in our own lives.

These needs will tend to color our sense of the particular work we are reading. An adolescent boy may,

identify
objects
needs
preoccupations
mind
impulse

for instance, in his relations with his family, his school, or his employers, be experiencing in many ways the problems and conflicts resulting from restraints imposed by accepted authority. At this moment of his life, he might find in *Mutiny on the Bounty* satisfying utterance of his rebellion, or he might react with extraordinary intensity to a play such as Shaw's *Devil's Disciple*. College freshmen have been known, very disconcertingly, to sympathize more than Shakespeare intended with Lear's unfilial daughters. Similarly, the youth who has just experienced disillusionment with friends might find the relationship between Othello and Iago the most significant and most moving part of the entire play.

The students emphasized literature as a means of enlarging their knowledge of the world because through literature they acquire not so much additional *information* as additional *experience*. New understanding is conveyed to them in a living, vivid, and dynamic way. They meet new characters or new social conditions and human conflicts directly and personally. In contrast to the historian's generalized and impersonal account of the hardships of the pioneer's life, they live through these hardships with Per Hansa and Beret in Rölvaag's *Giants in the Earth*. The sociologist may offer them analyses and statistics concerning the city as a breeder of juvenile delinquents; in *Dead End*, they see the thing happening before their eyes. The anthropologist can teach them the ethnology of the Eskimo or the Chinese; in Peter Freuchen's novel *Eskimo* and in Pearl Buck's *The Good Earth*, they themselves become part of these

cultures. They may read encomiums on the devotion and disinterestedness of the scientist; in *Madame Curie* or *Arrowsmith* they share his single-minded zeal, his frustrations, and the intellectual and emotional rewards of his success.

Our college girls were also equally frank concerning the "escape" value of literature. They were especially ready to speak of the form of escape which takes us out of the too familiar circumstances of our everyday lives. This term *escape* has been used perhaps too often in an indiscriminately derogatory sense; there are useful and harmful forms of escape. Anything which offers us refreshment, a lessening of tension, may have its value in helping us to take up our practical lives with renewed vigor. The unfavorable overtones of the term are due to the fact that much of the so-called literature of escape does not refresh or reinvigorate the reader.¹ The greatest literary works may have for a particular reader the value of an "escape." Our lives may be so monotonous, so limited in scope, so concentrated on the drudgery of practical survival, that the experience of profound and varied emotions, the contact with rich and subtle personalities, the understanding of the wide range of human activity and human problems may be denied us except through the medium of literature. Or a great work may give to even the person living a full and happy life, a moment of change, of "escape" from the demands of "reality." It is obvious that the capacity of a particular book to offer such values will be directly

¹ See Chapter 7, pp. 249-254.

capacity of
a book to offer
value indirectly
related to the
emotional needs
of the reader, which
will be a function
of his particular
situation &
preoccupation

related to the emotional needs of the reader and his particular situation and preoccupations.

Another important potential satisfaction from literature which the students only hinted at, is the possibility of compensating for our own lacks or failures through identification with a character who possesses qualities other than our own or who makes fuller use of capacities similar to our own. The young girl may in this way identify with Juliet or with Elizabeth Bennet; the boy, chafing at his childish status, may identify with an epic hero. This compensatory mechanism may in part explain our vivid identification with characters very different from ourselves. Here again, the force of the reader's emotional reactions will be channeled in ways dictated by his sense of his own lacks or weaknesses. This process is usually considered in much too crude terms, since we may find compensation through literature not only for the major lacks that we recognize. The human being has, in addition, many latent capacities for modes of life and action that he would not particularly desire, but whose exercise through literature will nevertheless give him satisfaction.

"Latent
Capacities
exercised
through
lit."

The ability to understand and sympathize with others reflects this multiple character of the human being, his possession of potentialities for many more personalities and kinds of experience than any one being could express. This may be one of the things that makes it possible for us to seek through literature an enlargement of our experience. Although we may see some characters as outside ourselves—that is, we may not identify our-

selves with them as completely as we do with more congenial types—we are nevertheless able to enter into their behavior and their emotions. Thus it is that the youth may identify himself with the aged, one sex with the other, a reader of a particular limited social background with members of a different class or a different period.

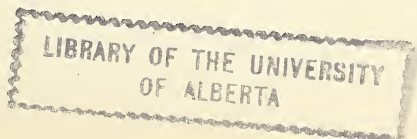
It was rather surprising to find a student making articulate another personal value of literature: its objective presentation of our own problems and conflicts. It places them outside ourselves, enables us to see them with a certain detachment, and to arrive at a more objective understanding of our own situation and of our own motivation. The young girl irked by the limitations of the small-town environment may derive such objectivity from Margaret Ferguson's story in Ruth Suckow's *The Folks*. The boy unconsciously rejecting an overpossessive mother may gain clarification from Bromfield's *A Good Woman*. This process of objectification may also go on in a disguised form. We may not always consciously admit the relevance of the literary experience to our own practical situation. Yet our attitudes may be clarified either by a violent reaction against what we have read or by an unconscious assimilation of it.

In connection with these capacities of literature, we must realize that the force of a work is not always in terms of the practical circumstances it presents. Much more potent probably is the particular configuration of basic human drives it reflects. The heroine of Floyd Dell's *An Unmarried Father* (1927) refuses to marry the

Use reading
to tap dominant
unrecognized emotions
& capacities present
in personality
mind of reader.

father of her child and rejects any maternal responsibility for it. Few girls in the 1920's would have taken such an individualistic stand; yet this situation symbolized much more basic though less spectacular problems that many girls of that time were struggling with: the need to affirm themselves as individuals who were not to be considered mere appendages of a husband and children, and whose worth was not to be measured merely in terms of a conventional relationship such as marriage. Or, to select a less "contemporary" work, when *Hamlet* is a moving experience for the adolescent today, may it not be because the play gives beautiful form to a prevalent mood of uncertainty and disillusionment, of reluctance to undertake aggressive action in a world gone awry? A more or less objective looking-on at our own problems may thus be produced by works that seem to deal with situations and personalities very different from our own.

Dormant, untapped emotions and capacities, then, enable the reader to find some relevance to his own nature in scenes and ways of life different from his own. A vivid response to a work will have its roots in capacities and experiences already present in the personality and mind of the reader. This principle is an important one to remember in the selection of literary materials to be presented to students. We need to remember that it is not enough merely to think of what the student *ought* to read. We must also base our choices on the possible links between these materials and the student's past experience and present emotional level.



There is an even broader need that literature fulfils, particularly for the adolescent reader. Much that in life itself might seem disorganized and meaningless takes on order and significance when it comes under the organizing and vitalizing influence of the artist. The youth senses in himself new and unsuspected emotional impulses. He sees the adults about him acting in inexplicable ways. In literature he meets emotions, situations, people, presented in significant patterns. He is shown the causal relationships between actions, he finds approval given to certain kinds of personalities and behavior rather than to others, he finds molds into which to pour his own nebulous emotions. In short, in literature he often finds meaning attached to what otherwise would be for him merely brute facts.

NONE OF THE STUDENTS, significantly enough, made articulate a sense of that emotional equilibrium which we have mentioned as a mark of a complete esthetic experience. This omission is undoubtedly explained in part by the difficulty of describing such moments of mental and emotional poise or illumination. It is probably even more largely explained by the important fact that the adolescent's attention is to an extraordinary degree focused on the personal and practical meaning of what he reads. We have glanced at several of the factors that produce this preoccupation with the human contribution of literature.

Yet this does not mean that the adolescent may not have the esthetic experience that can grow out of these

human concerns. The student who has lived intensely and vividly through the experience of *Othello* will have been carried along on the wave of feeling and insight to the moment of ultimate resolution. His sense of the gamut of human experience and emotion will have been broadened. He will have entered, for the time, into a strange world of moral values and responsibilities. He will have identified himself with a character of complete integrity, living vigorously, meeting fearlessly the demands of his moral code. But this participation in human affairs will have been possible only because *Othello* is above all a work of art. The resonant blank verse, the opulent imagery, the swiftly paced structure of the play, are an integral part of this reliving of Othello's and Desdemona's tragedy. The entire experience has a balance and an inner logic, a completeness that only the great work of art can offer. The students would tend not to speak of this phase of the matter, precisely because these formal and stylistic elements of the drama were the means *through which* they apprehended its human import.

We can now do justice to this problem of form and style without being false to the psychological process involved in the relationship between book and reader. We cannot emphasize too much the fact that we have been discussing specifically the social insights and enriched human understanding that may arise from the experience of literature. *The enhancement of these human values will therefore depend upon the intensification and enrichment of the individual's esthetic experi-*

ence. Any theory about art that tends to break up the response to literature into distinct segments, whether under the headings "social" versus "esthetic" or "form" versus "content" is misleading. Of course, the teacher must himself have a zestful appreciation of the sensuous and formal aspects of literature if he is to be of any help to his students. Yet if he does not in addition see these aspects of literature in their organic relation to those broader human aspects that we have been discussing, he will merely tend to impoverish his students' sense of both literature and life.

More than merely the intellectual "content" of literature was involved in the discussion in Chapter 1, or in the preceding consideration of factors molding the reader's response. Those factors influence the reader's sensitivities to all aspects of the work of art as an integral whole. Indeed, it is our contention that although one may talk about qualities of form and style or about content, this theoretic division has little to do with the actual psychological situation when we are responding to a given literary work. Actually each of these aspects of the work exists by virtue of the other aspects.

We may, for example, talk about something called the sonnet form, but such a form can be apprehended only as it is embodied in a particular sonnet made up of particular words. We cannot dissociate from the total effect of the poem the meaning of the words—the images, concepts, and emotions that they denote, the feeling tones and associations that cluster about them. It is equally impossible to distil from the total effect the

sound of the words or the beat of the verse. We can tap out the rhythmic pattern of a poem, but will any one contend that our sense of that tapping is the same as our experience of the rhythmic pattern when it is embodied in a sequence of sonorous and meaningful words? Obviously, the effect of a sonnet on a person who does not know the language can offer few clues to the impression that would be produced by the sound and rhythm upon a person who understood the meaning of the words as well. The complete effect of a particular sonnet is the result of the fact that different elements affect us simultaneously, reënforce, and one might almost say, create one another. Similarly, in music we may define a particular form such as the fugue, but we can never experience the form abstracted from the complex texture of some specific musical work.

It is equally impossible to experience "content" apart from some kind of form. We all know that a paraphrase of a poem does not represent the content of the poem. Certain of its concepts and implications have merely been expressed in a different form. One might, for example, state the various ideas and name the various emotions encountered in Shelley's "Adonais," but this would, in a sense, be offering not only a different form but also a different "content." The various concepts and images take on significance and emotional and intellectual overtones from the particular form in which they are represented in the poem. Even a transposition of the different stanzas would have given them a different significance to the reader. To encounter an idea

after our emotions have been aroused through various images and rhythms gives that idea a very different significance from what it would have if presented in another rhythmic pattern or in another sequence. The term *content of the literary work* is confusing when used to indicate abstract intellectual import.

If we think in terms of the total experience of the reader, we shall not be thus misled. We shall see that the formal relationships in the literary work—the verse form, rhyme scheme, sentence structure, plot structure—or the other sensuous elements, such as the imagery, do not have a separable or even a clearly distinguishable effect. How can we legitimately dissociate anything called the content of a poem from the interplay of sensations and concepts and emotional overtones produced by the particular words in the particular relations to one another in which they are found in the poem itself? Only as we become sensitive to the influence of subtle variations in rhythm and in the sound and emotional overtones of words, only as we become more refined instruments upon which the poet can play, will we be able to experience the impassioned ideas which the poet seeks to convey.

[Similarly, it is essential to hold firmly to the totality of the reader's experience of the literary work whenever we are tempted to speak as though the structure of a play or novel were distinct from the specific sensations, emotions, personalities, events, presented in the work. The sense of the form or structure of the play or novel results precisely from the fact that these

"
experience
use
relate
variety
create a
bottom
(57)
*

particular elements and no others are experienced in particular relations to one another. Just as in a melody a particular note takes on color and character from its context, so in a play or novel, the significance of any particular scene or personality is the result of the context in which it is represented.

To return to our illustration, *Othello*: the scene in which Desdemona sings the "Willow Song" while Emilia helps her prepare for the night would have little poignancy or even interest to any one who knew only that scene of the play or if that scene were placed at some different point in the play. It would be hard to say whether the transposition would be a change in form or in content. The actual result would be to make the reader or the audience see and feel fewer human implications in the scene. Similarly, although we may speak of the structure of the play and even make diagrams that purport to represent the rising tension and the climax, we must remember that the rising tension results from the reader's identification with certain personalities presented to him and his vicarious experience of emotions and events. The very stuff of the play, the very thing which possesses structure or form, is the series of images, emotions, ideas, which the reader perceives.

Thus we find ourselves involved in a circular argument. If we start with form or structure, we find that we are merely talking about the particular relationships of certain human sensations, concepts, and emotions. If we talk about so-called content, we find that we are merely dealing with the significance that arises from the



fact that certain human sensations, concepts, and emotions are presented in a particular series of relationships.

We need, therefore, to be careful in our teaching not to give our students the idea that the formal relationships in a literary work exist apart from and are merely superimposed upon something called the *content*. Much truer to the reality both of literary creation and literary experience is the sense of how organically interfused are these two phases of the work of art.

We are agreed that our students need to understand the nature of the diverse literary forms—the lyric, the epic, the novel, the essay, the drama—forms that our literary ancestors and contemporaries have developed through the cyclic process of “convention and revolt.” We want to share with our students the pleasure to be derived from a discriminating insight into the means that the author has employed and the variations he has played upon the traditional pattern. Knowledge of the problems of artistry, a recognition of the author’s aims and of the technical difficulties involved in achieving these aims, often tend to increase enjoyment. We gain pleasure from discovering the kind of structure that the artist is creating, from seeing things fall into a pattern. We become aware of why the author introduced various characters or episodes or images into the work; we see what the work as a whole “means.” That perception of order or pattern is important to the average reader, however, only in relation to the impact of the work as a whole.

One of the best ways of helping our students to gain

this appreciation of literary form and artistry is to enable them to engage in creative writing. In this way they will themselves be involved in wrestling with the materials offered them by life or by their reaction to it. Thus they will become aware of the fact that problems of form and artistry are not separable from the problem of clarifying the particular sense of life or the particular human mood which the work of art is destined to embody.

Our aim is to make our students more sensitive to all that the work of literature offers. We shall do this most effectively if we recall that the reader's rôle is an active, not a passive one. The artist using the medium of words must, like other artists, make his appeal primarily to the senses, if his desire is "to reach the secret spring of responsive emotions." Because he cannot tangibly represent what he offers, since his medium lacks the direct force of pigment or marble, the writer must select significant images that will stimulate his reader to undertake the process of sensuous and intellectual recreation. The greater the reader's ability to respond fully to the stimulus of the word, and the greater his capacity to savor all that the writer can accomplish with rhythm, sound, and image, the more fully will he be able emotionally and intellectually to participate in the literary work as a whole. In return, literature will help the reader to sharpen further his alertness to the sensuous quality of experience. Such training, we have said, is extremely necessary in our society, geared toward a neglect of the quality of the means in an obsession with

> acceptance of
opinions as
valid

> reading
> exposure to
> inner speech
> thinking
oral language

Can it be eased?

creativity helps gain appreciation of

literary form & artistry

How to get all words right

words & be a problem

how?? needs tools.

Semantic

phonetic transformation

not really

practical ends. The very nature of American life, particularly in the cities, tends also to dull our perceptions. The teacher who helps the student to acquire the habit of keen awareness to the color, sound, movement, of the world about him will have given him a precious possession, one that has social as well as esthetic value.

Here again, we find that even in a discussion of the writer's artistic medium, we are necessarily led to consider the kinds of human experience toward which words point. Words themselves, it is true, not only point toward something else but also possess a sensuous quality of their own. The child, long before he understands the meaning of the words, will derive pleasure from the sound, the rhythmic movement, and subtle inflection of a lyric by Blake. But this represents only the thinnest and most fragmentary response to words. Those pleasant sounds can evoke for him extraordinarily rich experiences as his mental and emotional capacities are enlarged, and he comes to know what the words symbolize. We must foster the child's delight in the music of words, but we must help him also to link up definite experiences and concepts with those sounds; he must come to understand more and more what a word implies in human life, in the external world, or in intellectual relationships. These aims apply, of course, throughout the whole process of the individual's acquisition of language. Perhaps our adolescent students are often impervious to the appeal of literature because words have not come to represent for them rich sensuous, emotional,

and intellectual perceptions. This again indicates that throughout the whole course of their language and literature training, the element of personal insight and experience has been neglected for verbal abstractions.

The teacher who himself possesses a keen awareness of the world about him will seek to develop as fully as possible the student's sensuous endowment and to help him get from literature and life the greatest measure of enjoyment of sound and color and rhythm. But as the student looks more closely at the world of sight and sound, he will also come to distinguish their effect upon his own moods. He will come to notice dominant impressions, to see certain patterns in events, to sense the clues to the state of mind of other people. Sensuous details will gain significance as they lead him to glimpse the emotional undercurrents that flow so swiftly beneath the surface of everyday life. In the same way, as the student acquires greater receptivity to the sensuous stimuli offered by literature and comes to understand literary forms and technique, he must be helped toward enriched emotional associations with them. Emphasis on abstract verbalization, on intellectual concepts cut off from their roots in concrete sensuous experience, is destructive of literary sensitivity and enjoyment. And it is equally true that image, form, structure, the whole sensuous appeal of literature, can be fully enjoyed only as it fits into the framework of a rich personality and a complex sense of life. Sensitivity to literary technique will flower in vital ways only as it is

linked up with an equally keen sensitivity to the array of human joys and sorrows, aspirations and defeats, fraternizings and conflicts.

THE TEACHER who is realistically concerned with helping his students to develop a vital sense of literature cannot, then, keep his eyes focused only on the literary materials which he is seeking to make available. He must also understand the personalities who are to experience this literature. We have seen that the very nature of the literary experience renders this imperative. The teacher must be ready to face the fact that the student's reactions to literature will inevitably be in terms of his own personality and background. These may often, it is true, lead him to do injustice to the author's dominant conception. Nevertheless, the student's primary experience of the work will have had meaning to him in these special emotional terms and no others. No matter how imperfect or mistaken, this will constitute the true present meaning of the work for the student, rather than anything he docilely repeats about it. Moreover, it is only on the basis of such direct emotional elements, immature though they may sometimes be, that the student can be helped to build any sounder understanding of literature. The nature of his rudimentary response is, perforce, part of our teaching materials.

We have just insisted upon the fact that the human import of literature is inextricably interwoven with the formal or sensuous pleasures it offers. It is upon this

ice!
Student response is part of the teaching materials of the reading program

human element as well as upon the literary style and structure that the individual reader brings to bear the pressure of his particular personality and needs. If his own experience of life has been limited, if his moral code is rigid and narrow or slack and indiscriminating, the quality of his response to literature will necessarily suffer. Conversely, any sensitivity to literature, any warm and enjoyable participation in the literary work, will necessarily be the result of the sensuous and emotional responsiveness, the breadth and the subtlety of understanding and human sympathy, the clarity of thought and feeling, that the reader brings to the work. |

We shall not further the growth of literary discrimination by a training that concentrates on the so-called purely literary aspect. We go through empty motions if we make it our primary concern to enable the student to recognize various literary forms, to identify various verse patterns and literary types, to memorize the earmarks of the style of a particular author. Acquaintance with the formal qualities in literature will not in itself insure esthetic sensitivity. We can demonstrate our acquaintance with a wide range of literary works, we can be keen judges of craftsmanship, and still remain, from the point of view of a profound understanding of art, esthetically blind. The history of criticism is peopled with writers who possess refined taste but who remain minor critics precisely because they are minor personalities, limited in their understanding of life. Knowledge of literary "forms" is empty without an accompanying humanity.

Contr
New
Crit

Thus as we attempt to develop the student's appreciation and enjoyment of literature, we must be concerned with furthering a parallel development of his emotional nature and his understanding of life. We must let no routine considerations or abstract formulations of theory obscure for us this central fact: that the literary experience grows out of the relation between an individual mind and personality and the literary work. In this way we shall be protected from the danger of emphasizing some elements in the literary experience to the exclusion of others. We shall be aware of the need to develop in our students alert receptivity to sensuous, stylistic, and formal qualities. We shall see these, however, as merged with, reënforcing, and reënforced by, those elements of interest which grow out of the reader's desire for various psychological satisfactions and social insights. In dealing with adolescents particularly, we shall want to satisfy the various demands for enlargement of knowledge concerning people and society and for greater self-understanding which so often motivate their approach to literature. The more complete their esthetic experience, the more fully will these demands be satisfied. A greater sensitivity to imagery, style, and structure will produce a subtler understanding of the human implications of the literary work, if at the same time the student's own personal demands on literature are being satisfied. The only way in which he will be able to refine his primary reactions to literature will be through a sharpening of his senses, a greater knowledge of him-

self, and an increasing refinement and enlargement of his scheme of values. Growth in human understanding is a necessary basis for literary understanding.

(A college instructor recently expressed surprise that Tolstoy's *War and Peace* had not been the extraordinarily moving experience for the students that he had expected it to be. He might have remembered that we need to bring to a work of this sort a fund of experience and capacity for emotion that will enable us to assimilate its comprehensive image of life.) The young student naturally could not absorb all that the book implies. Nevertheless, his reading was not wasted effort. Although his intellectual and emotional grasp was not yet large enough to embrace this monumental recreation of a society, he undoubtedly derived certain particular illuminations of human nature and insights into personal and social relationships. These will be added to the fund of understanding and to the capacity for emotional response with which he will meet other literary works in the future.

Just as a profounder and more balanced sense of life will enable us to appreciate more fully the experience that literature offers, so literature itself may be a powerful means of increasing that understanding of life. This reciprocal process is especially typical of the young person's relation with books. Our efforts will bear fruit in his increased ability for future appreciation of literature to the extent that we further the clarification and enlargement of his personality and his insight into life.

THIS VIEW OF THE LITERARY EXPERIENCE raises a number of questions. What does it signify for actual teaching aims and methods? How can we reënforce this reciprocal process? How can we develop in our students greater sensitivity to all of the organically related facets of the literary work? What does the student bring to literature? What adolescent needs and interests should the teacher be aware of? What constitutes for us a sound approach to human relations? How can we utilize the potentialities of literature to aid our students to increase their emotional and intellectual grasp, to understand themselves better, and to see human beings and society in a broader context of emotions and ideas? In short, how can we help our students to profit from all that rounded literary experiences offer? Parts Two and Three of this study will explore some of the practical answers to such questions.

Part Two

THE HUMAN BASIS OF LITERARY
SENSITIVITY

3

THE SETTING FOR SPONTANEITY :

Relationship between S + T

IT WAS discovered recently, during a reorganization of Indian education, that in some reservation schools, the Indian boys and girls were being required to read Restoration comedies. We laugh at the idea that these children whose past experience has been only the crude conditions of the reservation village, or the more or less fragmentary vestiges of their native culture, should be plunged into reading the sophisticated products of a highly complex foreign country remote in space and time. Can we doubt that the children could "make nothing of it"? Any show of "understanding" a Restoration play would undoubtedly be merely a verbal procedure, a parroting of words and phrases, a summing up that would have no relation to anything the Indian child had known, and would therefore remain merely so many words acquired to satisfy a teacher's demand.

The plight of these Indian children differs probably only in degree from the relation of the average American child to much of the literature which he meets in the classroom. The relevance of literary materials has too often been measured in terms of purely intellectual

comprehension. If the student has been able to demonstrate understanding by means of verbal definition of the scenes, actions, and personalities presented, the teacher has usually been satisfied. Yet when we reflect upon our own experiences with literature, we become aware of the type of reaction which is merely superficial, because the work has presented nothing which awakens an intimate personal response. We can all sympathize with the complaint of Coleridge in "Dejection" when, because of his preoccupations at the time, he could look upon the sky and the moon and the stars and merely "see, not feel, how beautiful they are." Too much of the average student's experience of literature is of this nature. The teacher is concerned with pointing out, with making the student "see," what in the work of literature has made *others* deem it significant. Whether the student himself has "felt" this significance, has had a personal experience, is an entirely different question, and one that is rarely considered.

Undoubtedly what happens in many English classes today is that the student functions on two separate and distinct planes. On one plane he memorizes the ideas about literature which his teacher or the literary critic presents to him as being the traditional ones accepted by all educated people. On the other plane, he reads the literature and has his own personal reaction to it which he may never express or even necessarily pay much attention to himself. Only occasionally, there will be a correlation of these two planes of activity. We cannot too often recall the fact that a book or a poem is

not a neatly labeled bundle of literary values to be pointed out to the student. If the consensus of critical opinion recognizes certain virtues in a given work, it is because the critics' direct experience of the work has led them to perceive those values. The student's repetition of that critical opinion would have significance only when he himself had lived through a process similar to the critics' experience.

If the images and ideas presented by the work have no relevance to the past experiences or emotional needs of the reader, only a vague, feeble, or negative response will occur. The various literary works with which our teaching is concerned should have a direct impact upon the mind of the student. Otherwise, we are going through empty motions.

It is not at all surprising that so few even of our college graduates have formed the habit of turning to literature—and more particularly good literature—for any sort of enriching or clarifying experience. Literature has been made for them too much something to know “about,” the book or play or poem something to summarize or analyze or define, something to identify as one might identify the different constellations in a star map or define the qualities of a particular chemical element. For, after all, is there a great difference between the mental process of memorizing the properties of hydrogen, its affinities with oxygen or its peculiar reactions to changes in temperature, and the process of memorizing that the romantic movement was a reaction against eighteenth-century classicism, was concerned with the

individual, and produced a great deal of "nature poetry"? How many students can reel this off for an examination and yet never have felt the full impact of a romantic poem! Literary history has its values, without question, as have the various approaches worked out by literary critics and scholars. Yet those values should not be permitted to obscure the fact that all the student's knowledge about literary history, about authors and periods and literary types, will be so much useless baggage if the student has not been led primarily to seek from literature a vital personal experience.

The lamentable fact is that far from helping the student in this direction, much literature teaching has the effect of turning him away from it. He is to a certain degree insulated from the direct impact of the work. He comes to it with the idea that he should see in it first of all those generalized values or kinds of information that the "literature course" stresses—summaries of plot and "main ideas" of the work, identification of certain characteristics that mark its period or "style," certain qualities of structure proper to one "type" or another. Much of even the best literature teaching is analogous to our typical American "spectator sports." The students sit on the sidelines watching the instructor or professor react to works of art. Though the student may develop a certain discrimination in the appreciation of professorial taste, this also tends often to obscure the need for the student himself to develop a personal sense of literature.

This, of course, does not imply a condemnation of

the various scholarly and critical approaches to literature. Their great value *in their proper place* will be considered later.¹ But we must start with the realization that they can be very easily transformed from useful aids into preoccupations that claim the center of attention and crowd the student's personal experience with literature into the dim outer fringe of vision.

It might be possible, for instance, to become quite proficient in the history of Italian literature without knowing a word of the language and without having read any Italian work even in translation. One would be able to sketch the sweeping lines of literary change, to discourse glibly on the special characteristics of the different periods, to name the contributions of its great writers, and to recount their biographies. It would be possible to learn summaries of the so-called "content" of their works, as for example, the story and the philosophy of *The Divine Comedy*. One might even hold forth on its relation to the dying medieval culture and to the dawning Renaissance. And as long as one had had no acquaintance with the works themselves, all this information would be without essential substance. Much of the activity concerning literature with which the average student busies himself in school and college has something of this character. The frame is elaborately worked out, but there is a blank where the picture should be. The personal experience and the understanding of the literature itself, which this his-

¹ See Chapters 5, 7, and 8.

torical and biographical information should enhance, are lacking.

The problem, then, that the teacher faces first of all is the creation of a situation favorable to a vital experience of literature on the part of the student. Unfortunately, many of the practices and much of the tone of literature teaching have precisely the opposite effect. They place a screen between the student and the book or poem or play. The solution of this primary problem is therefore complicated by habitual attitudes and academic practices. It is undoubtedly the problem which the majority of English teachers still need to concentrate on, for in many of the English courses today the instructor never gets even a glimpse into the student's personal sense of the work discussed. The teacher may be interested in a work such as, let us say, Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, from the point of view of the history of the novel form in England, or he may be eager to show that the satire is based on a common-sense emphasis on balance and restraint, typical of the eighteenth century. The student, however, may be impressed by the revelation that then, even as now, the business of finding a mate was no simple matter, and that then, even as now, the clash of personality and the concern with "what people will think" was important. In fact, in many cases there is an unbridged gap between anything that the student might actually feel about the book, and what the teacher, from the point of view of accepted critical attitudes and of his adult sense of life, thinks the pupil should notice.

This often leads to a feeling on the student's part that literature is something academic, something remote from his own present concerns and needs. He recognizes that there is a traditional aura about literature, but it becomes something to be discarded when his school days are past. (We all know the student who says, "but I have *had* Shakespeare," as though it were something to suffer through and forget, like the measles.) Thus he does not learn to turn spontaneously to the literature of the past or to the comparable good literature of the present; such works, he feels, must be approached only in full dress and with all the decorum of critical method handed down by the teacher. He is cut off from the living value they might have for him. Instead he turns to the pseudo-literature of the popular magazine and cheap novel.

The fact is that, for many students, the only thing approaching a personal literary experience is provided by "trashy" or "pulp" writings. This certainly is not because there is no good literature that would arouse their interest and fulfil their needs. Obviously, some of the blame for this situation must rest upon the attitude toward "good books" built up in the mind of the student in school and in college. That attitude seems to be often a defensive one. He feels that in the presence of such works he must do the "right thing." He has been given to understand that there are proper ways to react, that there are certain things to look for—that he must be ready to discuss the "characterization" or to analyze "plot and sub-plot" or to talk about the author's "choice

of words." Instead of plunging into the work and permitting its full impact upon him, he is aware that he must prepare for certain questions, that his remarks on the work must satisfy the teacher's already crystallized ideas about it.

The college instructor who has much contact with freshmen in literature courses is often perturbed to find this attitude affecting the work even of students who show that they have the capacity necessary for the development of profound literary appreciation. Of course, to some extent this is merely another reflection of that blight on our educational system which places the emphasis on the approval of the teacher and the attainment of good marks, rather than on the value of the work or the knowledge for its own sake. Still, even within the present limits set us, the teacher of literature in school and college can do much to destroy this feeling that good books are merely something to "know about" in order to be considered educated.

Nothing is more disheartening to the sincere teacher than the facile flow of conventional patter with which conscientious and intelligent students often comment on a book. Having been subjected to facts about books and authors and literary movements, believing that they have been taught the right things to look for in any book, they are not at a loss for a glib discussion of it; yet it is obvious that the book itself has personally meant nothing to them. Moreover, they are often pathetically timid and insecure when given the oppor-

tunity and the responsibility of expressing their own honest reactions.

This sad fact has impressed itself upon all teachers who have been to any degree concerned with fostering a personal love of literature. Some years ago, Professor I. A. Richards of Cambridge University set about getting some systematic documentation on this point. Each week, he asked his class to write comments on four unidentified poems. No clues concerning title, authorship, period, school, or literary value were given. As he reports in his book, *Practical Criticism*,² the students found it extremely difficult to make up their minds about the poems or even to work out several possible opinions from which to choose. They set forth an extraordinary variety of views and the "reckless, desperate" tone of many of their comments revealed their bewilderment. Instead of being able to apply to the poems some neatly ticketed interpretations and judgments appropriate to their authorship and their literary period, the students were forced to base their judgments on their own intimate reactions. In most cases, their training in literary history and their fund of critical dicta concerning good poetry were of very little help in the handling of their unvarnished primary personal responses. They were thus at the mercy of personal obsessions, chance associations, and irrelevant conventional opinions about poetry. Hence, they often failed to understand the poems.

² New York, Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1935 (First Edition, 1929).

Evidently, in most cases this was an unprecedented demand that was being made upon these students. Yet this is the demand that should have been made upon them during the whole course of their literary training. They should have been given the opportunity and the responsibility again and again to have faced their primary responses and to have developed organically from them a personal approach to literature. A knowledge of the critical attitudes of the great body of competent readers of the past and present would have then been significant because there would have been a personal core to which to assimilate it. A secure approach to poetry would have included all of the "background" they possessed; it would have been not a crutch but a tool.

Surely few of us would maintain that the great body of our American students, subjected to similar experiments, would yield a different picture. The majority of them probably would not reveal even as much "literary background," let alone the ability to utilize it unaided by any of the usual props. How often we find it necessary to insist that students should not consult histories of literature or standard works of criticism in order to find out what to think about an author. But we have not usually gone on to discover why our students are so lacking in self-reliance.

HOW THEN CAN WE HELP our students to have such vital and significant experiences with literature that they will indeed intimately and lastingly come into their literary heritage? This basic problem has always been the con-

cern of the teacher who is also a lover of literature. He has known that without this all his conscientious lecturings and questionings, all his "techniques," are valueless. To attempt a comprehensive answer to this problem would, of course, be fatuous. We can hope only to touch on certain phases of the question. Our tendency will naturally be to emphasize those aspects of this broad problem which we believe to have been most generally neglected.

In discussing some of the phases of the teaching process, we shall be concerned with what should, ideally, take place. Neither the order of subjects discussed, nor our phrasing in terms of an imaginary classroom situation, should be interpreted to mean that any pattern or formula is being set up for any one teacher or class to follow. We know how far short of his goals any teacher will come in any given teaching situation, with its limitations of time, its complexities and accidental developments. Our object in talking in terms of any ideal situation is rather to underline certain general considerations that should be present in the teacher's mind. Such idealized pictures are intended principally to suggest a modification of emphasis.

We can assume that unless the teacher himself has an intense love of literature, anything else that we may say concerning his aims or his methods will be useless. He cannot hope to transmit or to develop in his students powers of enjoyment and appreciation which he himself does not possess. By implication, our definition of the ideal relationship between the student and the

literary work applies also to the teacher. As long as we ourselves are ridden by an artificial and pedantic notion of literary culture, we should not be surprised at our students' indifference to the great works of the past and present.

The teacher's personal love of literature, however, has not always been proof against the influence of the routine, pedantic notions concerning teaching methods. He is dismayed at the results indicated by the low level of taste about him; he undergoes constant frustration; or he consoles himself by focusing on the rare student who seems to possess the divine spark. The process of developing more such students will be one of liberation for the teacher as well as his pupils, liberation from routine procedures which may possibly have been vital in the situation in which they first developed but out of which the life has now gone. At the heart of this process of reëducation will be the teacher's resolve to hold tenaciously to his own intimate delight in books, his own zestful sense of literature as a living art.



The persistence of many of the routine procedures in literature teaching makes it necessary for us to phrase some of our primary duties in negative terms. We must first of all avoid imposing a set of preconceived notions as to the proper way to react to any work. The student must be free to grapple with his own reaction. As we shall see later, this primary negative condition does not mean that the teacher abdicates completely or need not attempt to instil sound habits of reading or sound critical attitudes. Nor does this imply that historical and bio-

graphical background material will be neglected. The difference is that instead of superimposing them in cut and dried fashion, he will help the student to develop these understandings in terms of his own emotions and his own curiosities about life and literature.

The student needs to be given the opportunity and the courage to approach literature personally, to let it mean something to him directly. The classroom situation and the relation with the teacher should be such as to give him a feeling of security. He should be made to feel that his own response to books, even though it may not seem to resemble the standard critical comments, is worth expressing. Such a liberating atmosphere will make it possible for him to have an unself-conscious, spontaneous, and honest reaction.

When the student feels the validity of his own experience, he will cease to think of literature as something that only a few gifted spirits can enjoy and understand in an "original" way. How often, when urged to speak out for himself, a student will respond, "But I'm not literary, the way Jane or John is!" He has somehow developed an inferiority feeling toward literature. Nothing is more conducive to this than the attitude of the instructor that he is one initiated into the esoteric mysteries of art, suffering with amused tolerance the Philistine reactions of the student. It is our duty to help the student overcome any timidity about books. Instead of looking upon them as something esoteric, he must realize that for himself the important thing is what the work means to him and does for him.

3 Another negative means of furthering a spontaneous response is to avoid placing undue importance upon the particular form in which the expression of his reaction should be couched. He should be able to express himself freely. We should not insist too constantly on the student's summarizing or rehashing his experience of the work. That in itself may become as artificial and inhibiting as any of the other routine methods. The student should feel free to let his comment take the form dictated by what he has lived through in reading the book. To set up some routine form such as, for instance, book reviews that (1) summarize, (2) analyze, and (3) evaluate, will probably again focus the student's attention on what is to be required of him after he has read the book, rather than on the book itself in its relation to him.

Although we must therefore not insist that all students give the same type of expression to their reaction, in most cases a personal experience will elicit some type of definite response; it will lead to some kind of reflection. It may also lead to the desire to communicate this to others whom the boy or girl trusts. Because of this, a situation in which the students can meet with the teacher to discuss what they have read is particularly necessary. An atmosphere of informal, friendly exchange should be created. The student should feel free to express what he feels, to make the judgments that have occurred to him. The primary criterion should be not whether his reactions or his judgments measure up to those that had been created by the body

of critical tradition, but rather the honesty and sincerity of the ideas and reactions he expresses. (One experienced teacher has found that his students are helped toward such assurance by his mention of comments that other students have made in past discussions.) The class should be merely a friendly group, come together to exchange ideas.

This situation in which free exchange of ideas is possible, and in which each member of the group feels confident to express himself, is an extremely difficult one to create. It represents by no means merely a passive or negative attitude on the part of the teacher. He must work actively to create an atmosphere of friendly and self-confident interchange. He must be ready to draw out the more timid students and to keep the more aggressive ones from monopolizing the conversation. He must be on the alert to show interest and pleasure in comments that have possibilities of development and to help the students elaborate their ideas. He must possess the art of keeping the discussion moving along consistent lines by helping to clarify the points of contact between different students' opinions.

One of the most valuable things they will acquire from this will be the ability to listen with understanding to what others have to say and to express their own ideas in relevant terms. If the students have thus far been subjected to the typical school routine, the tendency is at first for them to address themselves only to the teacher; the conversational ball is constantly thrown to the teacher, who then throws it to another student,

who again returns it to the teacher, and so on. The more wholesome situation is one in which the ball is passed from student to student, with the teacher participating as one of the group. This interaction among students is something that must be cultivated.

BUT SHOULD NOT THE TEACHER or instructor enter more positively into the picture? Should his function be merely to select a sufficiently wide range of good books, place them upon the shelves of a library, turn the students loose to seek their own mental and emotional nourishment, and then listen to their spontaneous comments? Even the decision as to what should be placed on the shelves of this library would make the teacher's task an influential one. Ideally, he would choose the books in the light of the considerations we have presented thus far: the consensus of authoritative opinion concerning what constitutes our most valuable literary heritage, on the one hand; on the other hand, an understanding of adolescent needs and conflicts, a recognition of the possible circumstances in their personal and social background that would make certain books of the past or present particularly interesting and illuminating for the student. This need to select from the body of great and good literature those works to which our particular students will be most receptive implies a knowledge not only of good literature, but also of the students.³

³ Ultimately, of course, students should learn to select their own books. An account of how high-school students developed increasing maturity

There is much to be said for Newman's vision of a university as a place where young people have access to books. For many generations, until quite recently, after all, English literature was not a "subject" for organized study and teaching. Yet it was a vital and absorbing interest to many, perhaps just because it was not a subject upon which had been elaborated a whole superstructure of traditional teaching practice. If the student turned to English literature, it was because he felt its personal value. He read with a free spirit, not because the academic powers decreed a knowledge of it necessary. We are not arguing a return to the old scholastic curriculum, of course; it possessed its own stultifying routines. Yet our aim should certainly be not to overlay with a dull film of routine the living sense of literature which was at least possible when there was no organized study of English literature. Unfortunately, it sometimes seems that it would be much better if students were turned loose in a library to work out for themselves some personal approach to literature.

This entire discussion, however, rests on the belief that the teacher of literature may have a powerful and a beneficial influence. Our basic postulate has been stated: that influence will be only the elaboration of the

and breadth of choice when permitted to choose the books to be added to the school library is to be found in Professor Lou L. LaBrant's *An Evaluation of the Free Reading in Grades Ten, Eleven, and Twelve* (Columbus, Ohio, Ohio State University Press, 1936). Under the restricted conditions of most public school systems, however, the most pressing need is that teachers should be aware of what books students require and should exert pressure for their introduction into the school library.

vital influence inherent in literature itself. Hence, important as it is, the selection of a humanly significant book list is only the first of the teacher's important functions. When we have freed ourselves from the routine treatment of literature as a body of knowledge and have developed the conception of it rather as a series of possible experiences, we have only cleared the ground. Once the unobstructed impact between living literature and the mind of the student has been made possible, extraordinary opportunities for a real educational process are open to the teacher.

A situation in which students did nothing but give free rein to their reactions, their likes and dislikes, would undoubtedly have psychiatric value. The psychologists have been warning us about the neurotic effects of the driving nature of our whole culture. In the compulsive atmosphere of the average school and college, where the emphasis is so much on fulfilling certain requirements, on living up to certain standards, a period when the pressure was relaxed and the student could feel that everything that he thought or said was equally valuable, might possibly have a therapeutic effect. But such latitude would certainly not be conducive to the development of literary understanding. Our aim in the teaching of literature should be to give the student the form of emotional release which all art offers, and at the same time, without strain or pressure, to help him to gain increasingly more complex satisfactions from literature. Therefore, we cannot be content merely to permit the student to go on endlessly

expressing untrammelled and untutored primitive emotions and ideas. We want to make it possible for him to have increasingly mature primary reactions to express.

HAVE WE NOT ALL FELT a glow of pleasure, a sense of having "stimulated" a class creatively, after the end of a period of lively discussion? Each student has uttered copious personal comments; there has been heated controversy as to the merits of a book or play or as to the meaning of a poem. And yet later, have we not sometimes wondered just what each student "got out" of the discussion?

Certainly, lively, untrammelled discussion, a free expression of attitudes, bespeak an admirable educational setting. The fact that the student is articulate, eager to express himself, is the sign of a wholesome attitude on the part of the teacher. The student has been given that immeasurably valuable feeling of adequacy, a sense that his experiences, his ideas, are worthy of consideration. Yet all of this, great an achievement as it represents, means only that the obstacles to real education have been eliminated. The student still needs to acquire mental habits that will lead to literary insight, critical judgment, and ethical and social understanding. There still remains the necessity for the teacher's offering certain positive aids to intellectual development. Though a free, uninhibited emotional reaction to a work of art or literature is an absolutely *necessary* condition of sound literary judgment, it is not, to use the logician's

term, a *sufficient* condition. Without a real impact between the book and the mind of the reader, there can be no process of judgment at all, but honest recognition of one's own reaction is not, in itself, sufficient to insure sound critical opinion. Given this free response, all things shall be added unto us. The implication is that there are other things to be added. Teachers who have been pioneers in freeing themselves from the old routines will be especially aware of the importance of envisaging this constructive phase of the problem.

One is rather forcibly reminded of this when one meets an occasional young man or woman who has been given unlimited scope. This young person possesses spontaneity and vitality and is refreshingly honest in expressing his reactions to literature. One often feels, nevertheless, that although his attitude toward books may be unspoiled by false reverence for what is "correct," his is not an emotionally organized or reasoned approach to literature. He is still at the mercy of his raw reactions, still uncritically ready to proffer every judgment as it is dictated by the chance circumstances of his own personal life. Although undoubtedly he is much better off and represents a higher plane than the students who have been deadened to any direct sense of literature, he is still functioning at the lowest critical level. He needs to retain his spontaneity and yet to develop further, to make of every literary experience something on which to build enhanced capacities for his next experience. For he can begin to achieve a sound approach to literature only when he reflects upon his

response to it, when he attempts to understand what in the work and in himself produced that reaction, and when he goes on thoughtfully to modify, reject, or accept it.

In this chapter, we have been concerned with stressing the importance of a relationship between teacher and students that will permit the student to respond intimately and spontaneously to literature. That problem has sweeping implications for classroom procedure and for the choice of works to be read and discussed. Yet, as the preceding paragraphs suggest, when the student has met the work of literature without artificial restrictions, and has understood it and evaluated it in his own terms, the teacher has accomplished only the first phase of his task.

The next and equally important phase of the teacher's influence should then begin: the clarification and enlargement of the student's response to the literary work. The student must be led toward a critical awareness of his own reactions. This entails two complementary objectives: on the one hand, increased self-knowledge, and on the other hand, a keener and more adequate perception of all that the work offers. These two kinds of clarification will go on simultaneously, each making the other possible.

This dual phase of the teaching process has not heretofore been sufficiently studied. We need to discover how, by starting with the student's own experience, we may lead him to desire the knowledge and to develop the critical powers that we feel he should possess. The

next two chapters will be concerned with how we may clarify the student's response to literature, in terms of his own nature and interests, as well as in terms of the special qualities of the literary work. Although for purposes of exposition we shall consider first one phase and then the other, it should be clear that these two aspects of the process of clarification complement and reënforce one another.

4

WHAT THE STUDENT BRINGS TO LITERATURE

WE ARE now assuming that there already exists the situation favorable to the student's spontaneous and personal response to literature. We assume also that through the kind of group discussion described in the preceding chapter, the students have stimulated one another to organize the scattered elements of their response and to formulate their interpretations and judgments. The teacher will have led the group to elaborate their opinions so that the fundamental points of agreement and disagreement have become clear.

The teacher's task now becomes one of helping each student toward a clarification of his response as the basis for an even more intense and fuller participation in what the literary work offers. One aspect of this, we have said, involves understanding and critical reevaluation by the student of his own preoccupations and assumptions. The teacher can help in this process only if he understands some of the possible forces molding the student's response and can anticipate some of the major needs and concerns of adolescents in our society.

In the interchange of ideas, the student will be led

to compare his reactions with those of other students, of the teacher, and if necessary, of established critics. He will see that a particular work may give rise to attitudes and judgments different from his own. Some interpretations, he will discover, are more defensible than others, in terms of the work as a whole. Yet he will also become aware of the fact that sometimes more than one reasonable interpretation is possible.¹ From this interplay of ideas the question will arise: Why was his reaction different from the other students? Why did he choose one particular slant rather than another? Why did certain phases of the book or poem strike him more forcibly than others? Why did he misinterpret or ignore certain elements? The attainment of a truer vision of the work will require the disengagement of the passing or irrelevant from the fundamental and appropriate elements in his response. What was there in his state of mind that led to a distorted or partial view of the work? What in his temperament and past experience helped him to understand it more adequately?

We have already been reminded of the fact that the reading of a particular work at a particular moment by a particular reader will be a highly complex process. Anything in the reader's past experience, any of his present preoccupations, his needs and frustrations—even his present physical state—may enter actively into the nature of his primary spontaneous response. In some cases, these things will conduce to a richer and more balanced reaction to the work. In other cases, they will

¹ See Chapter 5.

limit or distort the reader's image of it. It is important that the teacher of literature be aware of some of the personal factors that will inevitably affect the equation represented by book plus reader.

The experienced teacher will undoubtedly be able to recall many illustrations of responses to literature colored by some personal factor. Some personal preoccupation or some automatic response to a minor phrase or to the general subject of the work will lead the student to a violent reaction that has very little to do with the work itself. A word such as *home* or *mother* or a phrase such as *my country*, with their many conventional sentimental associations, may often set off an automatic reaction that tends to blind the reader to the context in which the poet had presented these words. The same thing happens on perhaps an even larger scale in connection with fiction and drama. A young college graduate recently expressed herself most forcibly concerning *Anna Karenina*. She had no sympathy, she said, for Anna, who was so preoccupied with her own affairs and who probably did not appreciate her husband. He was undoubtedly the kind of man who loves deeply but is unable to communicate his feelings to others. When the young woman was informed of the more usual interpretation of Anna's husband and was asked to point out in the work itself the basis for her interpretation, she replied, "But there are people like that, with very warm hearts and intense affections, who are unable to let others know it. Why, my own father is like that!"

The personal sources of this reader's blindness to the author's intention were revealed here in clearer terms than is usually possible in a classroom or a school situation. Something accidental to the book had caused her to identify Karenin with her father. This is typical, however, of the less obvious ways in which we tend to project upon a book something out of our own experience which probably has been only vaguely suggested. In this case, it destroyed the effect which Tolstoy undoubtedly intended. Often, the most vigorous and obstinate expressions of a seemingly wilful misreading may be caused by some such projection into the work of the student's own experience or preoccupation. Sometimes such a projection may cause the reader to have a much more violent emotional experience than the author himself planned. Rosamond Lehmann might have been astonished at hearing a seventeen-year-old girl recently pronounce *Invitation to the Waltz* "the greatest tragedy I ever read." It is not difficult to deduce that this girl's own personal history and present preoccupations would explain her reaction to this wistful story of a young girl's not too happy first ball.²

It is always easier to detect the influence of the reader's preoccupations and past experiences when, as in the

² A college teacher who read this chapter in manuscript was reminded of an example of such "overweighting" that occurred in one of his classes last year. "A young man of lax views, and, I fear, lax practice, suddenly discovered to his immense delight that he had Shakespeare's authority for what he was saying and doing. Quoting Sir Toby's 'Dost thou think, because thou art virtuous, there shall be no more cakes and ale?' he solemnly announced, 'That is the greatest sentence ever written!'"

preceding instances, they lead to an interpretation different from the author's probable intention. The content of the reader's past life and present concerns plays an equally important part, however, in enabling him to have a rich and balanced response to a given literary work. Every personality which reacts to the work of art has incorporated a fund of attitudes and interests deposited by former interactions with the environment.

Past literary experiences, of course, make up an important part of this equipment which the reader brings to literature, but it is a part which has usually been emphasized to the exclusion of other elements derived from general life experience. In order to share the author's insight, the reader need not have had identical experiences, but he must have experienced some needs, some emotions, some organization of concepts, some circumstances and relationships, from which he can construct the "new" situations, emotions, and understandings set forth in the literary work.

Moreover, the work will have been a vital experience to the extent that these new elements can be assimilated into, and hence even modify, that original background of personality. For if he shares the author's vision whole-heartedly, it is because the reader possesses not only the psychological potentialities but also the mental readiness to participate in just this vicarious experience. In a motion-picture theatre recently, a ten-year-old boy was heard to exclaim, just as the hero and heroine fell into the traditional closing embrace, "This

is the part that I always hate!" That feeling is evidently not shared by the millions of adults who view such pictures weekly. This quite obvious point concerning readiness is one that is often forgotten when literature treating more complex situations and insights is involved. The teacher, particularly, needs to remember that in the molding of any specific literary experience what the student brings to literature is as important as the literary work itself.

Part of our equipment for helping the adolescent to fuller literary experience will therefore be an understanding of adolescent concerns and an awareness of some of the possible personal factors that may limit or enhance his response.

Every opportunity for coming to understand the individual student will therefore be valuable. Under the usual teaching conditions, these opportunities are unfortunately only too rare. All the more reason, therefore, for the teacher to work out some general understanding of the possible experiences and preoccupations typical of the particular group of students with which he is dealing. Since in this book our attention is centered particularly on the high-school and early college years, it will be useful to suggest some answers to the question: What does the adolescent bring to literature?

Our discussion will not attempt to be inclusive. We shall merely try to suggest some of the awarenesses of adolescent concerns that will be helpful to the teacher in his attempt to understand the student's spontaneous

response to literature. A knowledge of typical adolescent preoccupations will also influence the teacher in the choice of literary materials.

THE ADOLESCENT READER to whom we offer the experience of literature comes to it out of a mass of absorbing and conflicting influences. It has become a cliché to describe as a time of storm and stress this period when the child is coming into possession of the physical and nervous endowments with which he will function as an adult. The marked physical changes that occur at this time probably have been excessively blamed for the difficulties that beset the adolescent years. Anthropologists have pointed out to us societies such as Samoa where these physical changes occur without emotional upheaval. In other cultures, the period of personal turmoil may fall at an entirely different age and without reference to physiological changes. Nevertheless, without making these changes the sole reason for all the problems of adolescence, we are justified in believing that in our society they do have certain emotional repercussions. The girl or boy is made more or less aware of these physical readjustments and recognizes certain transformations in his emotional drives and personality traits. A heightened self-consciousness and curiosity about the self usually follows. It is obvious that this will affect his attitude toward the essentially human art of literature.

The self-consciousness of the adolescent seems often

to center about a concern with normality.³ He is worried by what seems to be any deviation from the "normal." His size, his height, his weight, his speed in movement, his strength, are constantly measured against what is considered appropriate for his age and social group. Philip Carey's self-consciousness about his deformed foot, in *Of Human Bondage*, is symbolic of the agonies of embarrassment that many boys and girls suffer because of much slighter and perhaps almost undetectable deviations from what they have come to consider normal. Temperamental traits are subjected to equally searching scrutiny: aggressiveness or shyness, physical courage or timidity, the capacity to make friends, will be measured against some kind of norm.

Even the subtler emotional traits, feelings of anger and envy, of loyalty and affection toward others, may trouble him if he is not sure that others have similar feelings. He seeks some standards against which to measure himself and derives his sense of them from a great many different sources. We shall later consider the ways in which literary experience may liberate him from too narrow a concept of normality.⁴ At this point, we wish principally to stress the fact that we must be aware of this preoccupation as at least a possible factor in our students' response to particular works.

The distress, insecurity, and bewilderment that often accompany these physical and social changes are prob-

³ A. V. Keliher, *Life and Growth*, A Publication of the Commission on Human Relations (New York, D. Appleton-Century Co., 1938), offers the adolescent helpful material on this subject.

⁴ See Chapter 7, pp. 239-243.

ably in large part due to the lack of mental preparation for them. Particularly is this true of our cultural prudishness concerning sex. In other societies, sexual maturation brings with it no insecurity because from early childhood the youth has been prepared for it. The adolescent in our culture who has suddenly been introduced to knowledge about sex will necessarily feel its impact as something extremely personal to himself. Even when he has been properly prepared, the nervousness, prudery, and even prurience of the attitudes toward sex in the society about him will undoubtedly cause complications. It is in spite of these tensions that the boy and girl must make an adjustment to this newly recognized phase of their nature.

Even teachers who are aware of this preoccupation of youth too often tend to evade or gloss over anything in literature that might have a direct bearing on this vital concern. Yet this rules out one of the most unfailingly powerful factors in the student's experience with literature. There is, of course, the opposing danger that the adult, whose sense of this phase of experience is necessarily different from that of the adolescent, may be excessively zealous to prove his emancipation and may thus make the adolescent too self-conscious about sex. We do not need to reënforce this self-consciousness, already sufficiently stimulated by advertisements, moving pictures, and fiction. Our responsibility is to vouchsafe a frank and wholesome recognition of the importance and potential beauty and dignity of this aspect of man's life.

Psychologists and sociologists confirm our observation that at this adolescent period the youth develops a certain social consciousness. Like Philip Carey, he wishes to find out "man's relation to the world he lives in, man's relation with the men among whom he lives, and, finally, man's relation to himself." The adolescent becomes more conscious of himself as a member of a family and a community. He becomes eager to impress others, to gain their friendship, and to be admitted into special groups. This leads often to intense self-consciousness concerning his own nature and personality and to a great interest in the ways in which people influence one another. Any one who associates with adolescents will know how they experiment with various ways of approaching people; they seem to "try on" different social personalities as one might "try on" new clothes.

The initiated adult tends to forget the awakening curiosity of the adolescent eager to see behind the façade of appearances. During childhood, he has accepted the bare framework of relationships as they have presented themselves to him, in his family, in his neighborhood, or in the larger world. Now as he nears adult years, he finds these relationships acquiring new and unsuspected meanings. Parents who had been taken for granted, their relation to one another summed up in their common parental rôle, are suddenly seen to have other hitherto unsuspected intense emotional ties. Again and again in biographical novels we are shown the adolescent hero or heroine suddenly made aware of this

hidden emotional life of their parents with all its demands and satisfactions, its irritations and disillusionments.

Thus it is with much of the adult world. The boy and girl are faced with the question: What are the personal emotional realities behind the world of appearances? What indeed does it mean to the individual—and potentially to me, the adolescent, about to “live”—to be a leader or a follower, to be a member of a community, to earn one’s living, to create a family, a circle of friends, to meet the ups and downs of fate, to know love and birth and death? What does it “feel like,” from within, to be this kind of person or that? To be angelic, cruel, dominating, passive? What are the satisfactions, what are the elements, of the many rôles that may be played? He is no longer satisfied with a childlike acceptance of the mere external gestures and trappings as of silhouettes against a screen. He wishes to experience these things from within. It is often to literature—and principally fiction—that he turns. Here he finds not only emotional release for the impulses already strong within him, but denied satisfaction in his life as a minor; he finds also through vicarious experience the insight he craves into the possibilities that life offers, the possible rôles open to him, the possible situations in which he may find himself.

BEING STILL IN THE DEPENDENT CHILDHOOD RELATION to the family, yet feeling himself practically an adult, the youth often begins to question the authority of the

family. Even in a stable well-integrated society, such as pre-industrial, agricultural America, the period of adolescence brings with it a heightened tension within the family group. The youth seeks ways of asserting his existence as an individual apart from it. He sets up the goal of psychological as well as economic independence. These attitudes frequently come into conflict with the desire of the family to continue its dominance, and with the psychic need on the part of the parents to feel themselves still an essential force in the life of their offspring. These strains and stresses make the whole subject of family relationships a field of particular interest to the adolescent. We should at least help him to understand the function that our culture assigns to the family in the life of the individual. He needs also to become more aware than ever before of his parents as personalities with emotional needs of their own. He will profit also from a clear understanding of the nature of both dependence and independence. Yet in the education and training that are given the adolescent in America there is little to enlighten him along these lines.⁵ He will sense these needs and curiosities, and here again, it will be often only from the reflection of life offered by literature that he will acquire these insights.

These conflicts and difficulties are tremendously complicated for the present-day adolescent, of course, by the fact that he is living at a moment when our society is

⁵ The Commission on Human Relations has material partially to fulfill this need: B. J. Stern, *The Family: Past and Present*; W. Robert Wunsch and Edna Albers, *Thicker Than Water: Stories of Family Life*, both published by D. Appleton-Century Co.; and a forthcoming publication, *Society and Family Life*, by Leo Huberman and Lorine Pruette.

singularly lacking in consistency, when changes in our economic and social attitudes are going on with unprecedented speed, when few of the traditional ideas remain unquestioned. The young boy and girl who have grown up within the relatively stable pattern set by the family are suddenly catapulted into a world of innumerable alternative patterns; the burden of many choices is placed upon them. They often find the ways of life, the ideas, and the activities that have been valued within the family, ill adapted to the conditions of a changing world. More than probably any other generation, they have the opportunity to formulate their own ideal life patterns. It is no longer assumed that the families they create will be organized on one pattern; an extraordinary range of possible relationships with their mates and with their children can be envisaged. Similarly, in their choice of work the settled values need no longer hold. The prestige of the successful business man has somewhat dwindled; the social value of the artist, the scientist, or the artisan is increasingly recognized. Similar breadth of choice and challenge to personal creation meet the adolescent as he seeks to develop a social philosophy and a set of values.

In ironic contrast to the bewilderingly generous choice of goals that presents itself are the heartbreaking obstacles toward their attainment created by our present economic disorganization. This too has enormously heightened all of the characteristic problems of adolescence. Economic independence seems often an impossible goal, or if it is attained at all, it is in such limited

form that a full adult life including marriage and a family is impossible. Formerly, in the years of prosperity and expansion, political questions or concern with possible alternative organizations of society often seemed remote and academic to the adolescent involved in plans for his own personal life. Today, even the least socially conscious individual is forced into some recognition of the influence of the surrounding society upon him. Here again, the teacher or professor will fail to convey a living sense of literature if he goes blithely on his academic way without recognizing that the student turns to literature out of this welter of shifting and uncertain social conditions.

Probably because of the jolt that our habitual attitudes have received, we have become somewhat more aware of the automatic and indirect ways in which we acquire our ideas of the rôles open to us in life. In a stable society, we should absorb from our childhood experience in the family and from the community about us the image of the behavior, the appropriate attitudes, the rights and the responsibilities of, for example, the various family rôles. The young man probably would automatically assume in his turn the rôles of husband and parent, without even consciously defining their attributes. He would need only to follow unquestioningly the well-channeled paths of social behavior.

Although more of these aspects of behavior have been forced into consciousness in our age of transition, it is still in the same automatic and indirect way that much of our behavior is patterned. We have absorbed ready-

made standards and attitudes from the family background, from the lives of neighbors, from the images of accepted patterns of behavior with which we are surrounded. The very emotions with which we most spontaneously meet a situation have, after all, been learned through the force of cultural suggestion. If a woman is indignant and jealous at the thought of her husband taking a second mate, it is because from childhood on she has constantly observed that situation coupled with that reaction. For the same reason, the native African woman will automatically express pleasure and gratitude when her husband proposes to take a second wife. Our sense of the culturally approved emotional reactions, our notions of right and wrong, our sense of the appropriate types of behavior, are in largest measure the result of such unconscious assimilation.

Thus it is that the adolescent will already possess a wealth of culturally absorbed attitudes and ideas of human behavior. And it will be principally through this same process of unconscious cultural absorption that he will build up his images of the possible future rôles that life offers. Innumerable influences in his environment will have given him a definite image, for instance, of the possible ways of behavior and feeling, even of the kind of temperament, appropriate or possible for a man or a woman. His parents and his family, through their own example and through explicit statement of the accepted attitudes, will have done much at an early point to set this mold. These will have been reënforced not only by the men and women about him

but also by the images presented in newspapers, books, and magazines, and in that exceedingly potent influence, the moving picture. The image of the man as dominant, masterful, superior, the woman, emotional, dependent, clinging, in need of help and guidance, is, for instance, the one most often and most forcibly presented to us even in this supposed age of woman's emancipation.

We are constantly bombarded with these images: in the actions and attitudes of the conventional members of the older and younger generations about us; in the distinctions, both subtle and crude, between the things proper for men and for women repeated endlessly in the newspapers and popular magazines; in the types presented with monotonous similarity on the screen. And we must recall, literature is another of these image-forming media. The human complications that are recognized as important and valid enough to be given explicit attention in fiction, in the newspapers, or in motion pictures reflect overwhelmingly the stereotyped notions of masculine and feminine nature and behavior. In the great majority of cases, these images will condition the actions, feelings, and choices of the individual.

Even in the case of the post-war generation that seems in such large measure to have broken away from these conceptions, the pressure of these older more deeply rooted images is still felt. The redefinitions of possible rôles for man and woman and of the possible relationships between them has gone on constantly in terms of revolt or readjustment to the older attitudes which still

permeate our environment. The present generation of adolescents particularly is subjected to the conflicting pressures of contradictory images. On the one hand, the traditional notions of the behavior of man and woman are being constantly reiterated; on the other hand, the adolescent meets with increasing frequency images of men and women behaving in ways alien to the traditional ideas. Women enter into activities thought appropriate only for men; children are given freedom that would formerly have been considered dangerous; grandmothers behave in ways formerly thought scandalous.

The adolescent's own assumption of adult rôles cannot therefore be as automatic as in the case of the youth in a more stable society. His choices, nevertheless, will probably in large part be made on an emotional basis. Against the weight and pressure of the traditionally accepted image, there will be exerted the dramatic appeal of the new and perhaps more practical image. In many cases, the assumption of the new type of rôle will be made only under the compulsion of new economic and social conditions. The old attitudes and habits of response will be constantly intruding themselves, complicating the individual's life, creating insecurity and confusion.

It is with such attitudes and preoccupations that the adolescent comes to his experience of literature. Anything that his reading may contribute must take its place in the complex web of influences acting upon him. His attention will be diverted to those phases of any work

that apply most clearly to his own emotional tensions and perplexities. He may often conceal with seeming indifference the reactions dictated by his particular obsessions, yet a teaching situation such as we have outlined in the preceding chapter would encourage him to give articulate expression to his emotional response. Moreover, we must face the fact that if a work, no matter how intense and stirring the teacher may think it, does not meet any of the adolescent's needs, he will remain indifferent to it.

The teacher should be aware of still another conditioning factor which will affect the student's sensitivity to literature. The individualistic emphasis of our society builds up a frequent reluctance to see the implications for others of our own actions, or to understand the validity of the needs and drives that motivate other people's actions. The fact that the success of the individual must so often be at the expense of others places a premium upon this kind of blindness to the needs and feelings of others. We teachers of literature must take this cultural pressure into account, since it is so directly opposed to the attitude of mind we are attempting to foster. For the very nature of the literary experience is a living into the experiences of others and a comprehension of the goals and aspirations of personalities different from our own.

Furthermore, much of what the student reads and sees will tend to coarsen his sensibilities and to make him less able to respond fully to the complex and subtle nature of good literature. We cannot afford to ignore

the crude pictures of human behavior and motivation offered to their millions of readers by the newspapers, or the oversimplified and false images of life presented by the pulp magazines. Not even the school as a whole, let alone the teacher of literature with his much more limited scope, can hope fully to counterbalance the great weight of the influences met in the surrounding society and in such institutions as the newspaper or the moving picture. The mere reading of a play by Shakespeare, or a novel by George Eliot or Henry James, cannot in itself be expected to wipe out the effect of all the desensitizing influences met outside the school or college.

Yet this is not a reason for assuming a defeatist attitude that would limit our hope of influence to the gifted student or the one with unusually favorable background. On the contrary, we must broaden our understanding of our function. We must do more than merely expose the student to great art. Although the reading of a novel will not in itself counteract all the unfavorable pressures, it may be made a means for helping the student to develop some resistance to those influences. And we can accomplish this only if we remain constantly aware of the nature of the social forces acting upon the student.

WHEN AN INDIVIDUAL STUDENT reads a particular work, there will come into play one of the innumerable possible variations upon our general picture of adolescent concerns. The particular community background of the

student will be a factor; whether he comes from the North or the South, from city or country, will affect the nature of the understanding and the prejudices that he brings to the book. Stribling's *The Forge* or Green's *This Body the Earth* will elicit a very different response from students of northern and southern background. *Main Street* and *Manhattan Transfer* will not mean the same thing to the city boy and the country boy. The daughters of a railway magnate or mill owner and of a factory worker will probably react differently to Norris' *The Octopus* or Anderson's *Poor White*. And when we turn to the literature of the past and of England, these same differences hold. The fact that our American population is becoming increasingly urban may explain the growing difficulty of keeping alive the love of English poetry, so permeated by country imagery.

THE STUDENT WILL BRING to his reading the moral and religious code and social philosophy assimilated from his family and community background. His parents may stem from a Main Street setting, or they may have turned from a life such as F. Scott Fitzgerald pictured to assume the duties of parenthood. The adolescents who will be coming to our schools and colleges in the next few years especially will reflect this diversity of moral atmosphere. The religious background of the student also often plays an important part. In a class studying Milton's *Paradise Lost*, the girl who was a devout Catholic presented a very different response from

the one who had been brought up in an agnostic milieu. Similarly, a discussion of *Romeo and Juliet* was given a rather unusual turn by one student's insistence that there was no tragedy since the lovers would be reunited after death. Similar problems will arise in connection with social and economic views. The child of well-to-do, middle-class parents who, after reading Henry Roth's *Call It Sleep*, insists that "some people like to be dirty and ragged and just won't work" will have rather a special approach to Dickens' *Hard Times* or Hugo's *Les Misérables*. Such things will necessarily affect the nature of the student's sensitivity or imperviousness to the special emphasis and quality of literary works.

Nor is it only these broader and more easily detected differences of equipment that affect our problem. The adolescent preoccupation with family relations may take a wide variety of forms. The degree of adjustment or maladjustment between the student's parents will have many unconscious reverberations in the student's receptivities or antagonisms. This may not often take so decided a form as in the case of the student who confessed that she had hated almost every story or play she had read in high school because they ended on the note "they lived happily ever after," so contradictory to the image of her own parents' unhappy disagreements. Authors, she felt, must be in some vast conspiracy of untruth. Here, certainly, is an instance in which acquaintance with some of the contemporary novels dealing with marital maladjustments might have led the

student to realize that the writer attempts to illuminate the whole range of human experience and that, therefore, his images of possible happiness might also be given some credence.

The student's own relations with his parents will also be a conditioning factor in his approach to literature. His identification with a domineering father, for instance, may make him get greater emotional satisfaction from images of successfully imposed authority than from images of an individual independently working out his own fate.

Anything, of course, that has entered into and shaped the development of the student's personality will be significant also for his literary development. We cannot attempt here even to enumerate the major factors that have been recognized as typical in our society. Nor can the teacher in dealing with the student hope to glimpse many of them, of whose import the student himself will be most of all unaware. Yet such general social attitudes ultimately will condition the whole texture of the student's experience of life as well as of literature. We should at least be conscious of the presence of these elements in the interplay between the book and the personality. Failures in sensitivity, lack of understanding, and seemingly distorted reactions often have their roots in these factors in personality. By helping the student to understand and evaluate his personal emphases, we shall help him to arrive at a more balanced and more lucid sense of literature.

THERE IS VERY LITTLE SYSTEMATIC INFORMATION available concerning the specific ways in which the individual personality colors the response to literature. The book by Professor Richards which we have cited⁶ offers some valuable illustrations of individual reactions to poetry. His elaborate and subtle analyses of his students' comments on poetry reveal some of the typical patterns of response, and his discussion of "Irrelevant Associations and Stock Responses" is especially pertinent to our present consideration. Drawing on illustrations from his book as well as from the experience of other teachers, we shall attempt to place these findings in a social and psychological context.

One of the things that prevents the full impact of the literary work upon the mind of the reader is the fact that he usually brings to his reading a fund of ready-made, sharply crystallized ideas and habits of response. These responses are so easily touched off that they sometimes interfere with the reader's understanding of what the author has said. Richards gives an illustration of this in several of his students' comments on Edna Millay's sonnet, "What's this of death, from you who never will die?" The fact that this poem suggests at once that the subject is the question of immortality elicited various ready-made responses. These prevented the students from understanding either the idea or the effect that the poet was aiming at. The students intro-

⁶ See p. 77. This is a book that every teacher of literature should read. It has stimulated many to clarify their own aims in teaching.

duced a number of irrelevant discussions on death or responded to only certain phrases in the poem that had some connection with their own preconceived ideas on the subject.

A similar instance occurred in a discussion of "The Eve of St. Agnes." One of the students announced that she thought the poem silly and sentimental. In personal conversation with the teacher, she defended this by adding that the poem was all about "romantic love twaddle." She happened to be at that early adolescent point of rebellion against the seeming adult obsession with this subject and therefore rejected anything that dealt with it. Obviously, she had not permitted herself a valid reading of the poem; she had therefore completely misunderstood its emphasis or the general effects with which Keats was concerned.

Subjects such as "home," "mother," "childhood," "birth," "death," "my country," possess whole constellations of fixed attitudes and automatic emotional reflexes. The popularity of the writings of such authors as Edgar Guest and Ella Wheeler Wilcox depends in large part on the emotion-arousing efficacy of such subjects, regardless of what the poet himself may say about them. The discussions of D. H. Lawrence's "Piano" by Richards' students offers further examples of the ways in which ready-made responses and irrelevant associations may interfere with the reading of any work that deals with a familiar subject (in this case recollections of a childhood scene with his mother playing at the piano). The Cambridge students were sufficiently so-

phisticated to be on their guard against the automatic appeal of such elements in Lawrence's poem. For some of them, however, this also became a barrier to understanding the poem. They recognized the stereotyped nature of the sentiments aroused in themselves by chance elements in the poem and blamed the poem for a conventionality inherent in their own feelings. They were so busy reacting emotionally against the possible automatic response to the idea of home and mother that they failed to react to the poem itself and see what Lawrence himself was expressing.

We are only too well acquainted with the power of even mediocre poetry to arouse an emotional response to patriotic and military subjects. The widespread success of such poems during the War was usually due to the fact that the whole environment was creating the intense emotions which the particular poem seemed to arouse. An emotional antipathy to war may be an equally powerful screen between the reader and the poem and may result in a like vitiation of critical judgment. After Housman's recent death, an intelligent young man of decided pacifist beliefs picked up *A Shropshire Lad* and glanced at "1887," written on the occasion of Queen Victoria's Jubilee. Shocked and indignant, he did not wish even to finish this poem that, by the very swing of its verse and the use of such traditional phrases as "God has saved the Queen," "saviours," "the land they perished for," seemed designed to arouse patriotic and warlike sentiments. If he had read the last stanza of the poem, he might possibly have

realized he had misread the earlier stanzas; it is more probable, however, that his strong preconceived response to the subject would have blinded him to the poem's ironic meaning.

It seems likely that our students will come to literature with increasingly strong and increasingly definite attitudes toward political and social themes. Such subjects are being discussed more frequently and more heatedly in their homes, in the newspapers, and over the radio. This suggests a whole complex of fixed attitudes and automatic responses which may cause difficulties.

Richards reports such a stock response in the case of students whose antipathy to the glorification of royalty led them to object to a poem on George Meredith's eightieth birthday which referred to him as "king of our hearts today." (It must be recalled that the students had no clue such as the title would have offered.) At a performance of *King Richard the Second* in New York recently, one of the spectators revealed a similar blindness owing to anti-royalist sentiments. He was annoyed at the appeal that the play patently had for him. "Why should I care about whether Richard or Bolingbroke wins out? The whole idea of kingship is an anachronism for us today." The emotional antipathies aroused by the fact that the play had to do with a king blinded him to its more universal interest, its subtly nuanced portrait of a man unable to wield the power thrust upon him, yet histrionically delighting in going through the motions of command, and as histrionically savoring the

drama of his own downfall. If the play had been about a present-day dictator or about the president of a great corporation or a great university, our irate spectator would have been able to enjoy the revelation of a human character that his automatic reaction to the idea "king" had obscured. We may sympathize with his political views and yet regret that he was not able to handle his primary response in such a way as to appreciate the permanent values of the work before him.

Class feeling is also becoming increasingly evident in current judgments on literature. The college boy who rejects Henry James' novels because he treats the life of the idle rich has his adult counterparts. Yet Marxian critics (such as Stephen Spender, in *The Destructive Element*) recognize the value of Henry James' evocation of the subtle interplay of temperament upon temperament and his searching image of the pre-war society. We have already mentioned the girl whose comment on a book about the East Side was merely that "some people just like to be dirty and ragged"—certainly a response that had nothing to do with what the author was presenting. This girl would probably read *Oliver Twist* without as articulate a phrasing of her idea, but can we hope that this same way of thinking would not be operating there too? When we consider the controversial nature of much of the literature being written today—novels such as Lewis' *It Can't Happen Here* or poems such as MacLeish's *Public Speech*, plays such as Green's *The House of Connelly* or Anderson's *Winter-set*—we see even more clearly the need for preparing our

students to make sound literary judgments. At least their response to the general political and economic tendencies of the work should not prevent their paying attention to the sensuous, emotional, and intellectual elements actually embodied in the literary work. Their attitude toward its social implications is by no means irrelevant, but should be brought to bear upon the book itself, in its specific terms, and should not be a screen between the reader and the work.

We have been speaking mainly of stock responses elicited by the general subject of the work as a whole. This type of predetermined response is easily detected, since the nature of the work itself will forewarn us. We need to remember, however, that the same type of excessive reaction may be produced by a word or a phrase or an episode in a work whose general theme has nothing to do with this particular prejudice or emotional fixation of the reader. We have seen an instance of this in the Cambridge students' misreading of the poem on George Meredith merely because the word "king" set off an automatic response that was irrelevant to the poem as a whole. The young girl's reaction to the love element in "The Eve of St. Agnes" is another illustration.

Our discussion of some of the conditions affecting the adolescent today has already suggested various other factors that would tend to implant in the student's mind limited or stereotyped preconceptions. We have spoken, for example, of the influence of a rural or urban background or of sectional provincialism in building up stock responses. The southern girl who praised as

"good books" all of those that offered the romanticized picture of the South and condemned such works as Paul Green's plays or Stribling's novels obviously was not functioning on a literary level. The same thing would apply to the student whose response to White's *Fire in the Flint* was that Kenneth Harper deserved his fate since he did not know his place as a Negro.

The fixed ideas and emotional associations that cluster about family and sex relations may also lead to frequent irrelevant responses. An example of this is a Cambridge student's condemnation of D. H. Lawrence's poem "Piano" on the ground that no sensible person would want to give up his adult independence and return to the limitations of childhood. Evidently resentment at restraints placed upon him in childhood may explain this reader's misunderstanding of the poem. His response was to something in his own mind and background, not in the poem. An argument concerning the value of Fielding's *Tom Jones* by a group of college girls also revealed the extent to which their reaction to the book was affected by each girl's image of the ideal young man. In many cases the image was sufficiently crystallized to hinder a complete understanding of the various phases of Tom's character that Fielding had presented.

IN ADDITION TO PREVENTING an understanding of what is read through the projection upon it of ready-made irrelevant responses, this fund of rigid attitudes and habits of emotion may also seriously impair the reader's.

judgment even of what he has understood. Richards shows us instances in which the reader had understood the fresh interpretation that the poem presented but condemned it because he was still dominated by the stereotyped conventional ideas and feelings on the subject. Here, of course, we encounter the difficulties that arise from the fact that a student will have absorbed from his environment cruder standards than are worthy of the kind of literary experience made available to him.

Recently this was brought home very forcibly to a teacher who in his course in short-story writing was perplexed by the superficial nature of the students' work. In his discussion of the problems presented by the short-story form, he had ranged through the whole field, selecting from such writers as Poe, Hawthorne, de Maupassant, Stevenson, Flaubert, Mansfield, and Wharton those stories that seemed in more subtle ways to handle problems only dimly suggested in the students' writings. When he pushed his investigation further, however, he discovered that the usual literary diet of the students was not the work of writers of this caliber but the stereotyped products of the "pulp" or third-rate magazines.

The students' justification of their reading was in psychological terms. "These stories were easy to read, offered no difficulties to the understanding. They ended happily and gave one a sense that success was not too difficult of attainment." In some cases the explanation was merely that these cheap stories were more easily available. Obviously, the instructor's expression of dis-

approval would have accomplished little. He wisely started from the level at which he found his students. By getting them to discuss some of the "pulp" stories they liked, he helped them to become aware of the stereotyped formulas and trick effects. The class then turned to other kinds of "escape" writing, such as Poe's stories, which require a more complex response and a more subtle perception of the writer's technique. The instructor's aim was gradually to lead the students to approach without resistance those stories which he considered most significant.

At once the human element entered, for it was obvious that the students were seeking in the escape of cheap success stories a release from the sense of pressure and defeat that permeated the world in which they lived. They had to be willing to relinquish the easy relaxing drug that made up their reading diet and to welcome the stimulating and challenging quality of those stories that attempted to present an honest and searching image of life.

One of the first things that the instructor had to do was to dissipate any feeling that the stories he suggested were to be studied principally from the formal point of view. The concern with technique had to be subordinated to a concern with the state of mind, the attitude toward people and life situations revealed by great writers of the short story. Fundamentally, this proved itself to be the sounder approach also to the problems of technique. The subtle qualities of mood, the ironic contrasts between personality and situation, the nature

of conflicts between characters, as well as the nature of the solutions of the conflicts—all these things were involved in an understanding of the technical means that the writers had employed. The students had been unable to assimilate the examples of technical success in the short story because they had been unable or reluctant to understand and assimilate the insights into life which the writers of those stories had sought to give. Again we are confronted with the need of building up, as a preliminary basis for literary appreciation, a richer, more refined, and more flexible sense of life.

It is extremely valuable for the teacher of literature to recognize the nature of some of these possible "stock responses." We have seen that in large part they represent the dogmatic platitudinous ideas about people and life that one meets on all sides: in the newspapers and the moving pictures, or on the lips of the man on the street. Similarly, they show themselves in ways of feeling that have become so conventional as to have lost all individual quality or fine shades. Our popular songs are repositories of such sentiments. Such responses are aroused with great ease as we see in the commercialized appeal to stock sentiments represented by Mother's Day and Father's Day, or by much of our advertising.

Yet the very essence of literature is a rejection of such stereotyped, superficial, and unshaded reactions to the mere outlines of situations or to the appeal of vague and generalized concepts. A poem or a novel grows out of some fresh insight into the quality of these things.

The reader, therefore, must possess a certain flexibility of mind, a freedom from rigid emotional habits, if he is ever to enter into the esthetic experiences the artist has made possible.

THIS IS NOT TO ARGUE that our object should be to create in the student such a state of flexibility and such a passivity to new kinds of experience that he will lose all the advantages of an integrated personality or a settled structure of ideas of his own. Keats, who possessed this quality of sensitivity to fresh experience to a supreme degree, speaks in one of his letters of the poet as one who possessed no character of his own because he could identify himself so completely with other forms of being and could adopt so readily new and untried forms of response. Precious as that capacity may be for the poet, in such an extreme form it is not a practical asset for the conduct of everyday affairs. A stock response may often, as Richards says, be a convenience. Just as it would be disastrous if at every occasion for walking we had to reason out the best way of putting one foot before the other, so in our intellectual and social life ready-made attitudes and ideas are also useful. By automatically taking care of the major part of our life, they leave us energy for meeting the new and unprepared-for situations.

What is needed is sufficient flexibility to free one's self from the stock response when it prevents a response more appropriate to the situation. This is as true of the problems encountered in our daily practical

lives, as it is of our encounters with literature. Much of the mismanagement of our lives, particularly in our personal relationships, is the result of our following a stereotyped and automatic reaction to the general outlines of a situation instead of responding flexibly to the special characteristics and changing qualities of that situation. The mother, accustomed to her children's dependence upon her for the management of their lives, continues to expect the same kind of dependence long after the children have grown beyond the need for it. During the years of America's economic expansion, the idea develops that the man without a job is shiftless and unenterprising; when the Depression makes it impossible for many of even the most enterprising to have jobs, this same attitude toward the unemployed persists in many quarters. The young man who has been accustomed to his mother's housewifely attention to his physical well-being becomes irritated when his wife, employed in business, overlooks these things.

In the experience of literature, where we are liberated from the demands that practical life makes on us for speedy and economical response and action, this capacity for flexibility should surely be exercised and enlarged. Fundamentally, what we are seeking is the development of individuals who will function less as automatic bundles of habits and more as flexible discriminating personalities. Our great heritage of literary experiences can be enjoyed and understood only by such personalities.

Our remarks concerning "stock responses" can be

translated into terms of the breadth or adequacy of the individual life experience. Something in the reader's own background or personality prevents him from understanding fully all that the author offers. His notions concerning possibilities of human behavior and character may be too limited, or his moral code may be too narrow and rigid to apply adequately to the complex human situations and emotions presented in literature. In its simplest terms, we have seen, this inadequacy of experience may take the form of the city child's inability to respond fully to country imagery; or a more extreme example is the Indian children's difficulties with Restoration comedy. How much of the adolescent's indifference to great literature is the result of inadequate experience? How much of the shallowness or capitiousness of his opinions on books is a by-product of a similar approach to situations in life?

Just as in medicine much of our knowledge concerning normal and satisfactory physiological processes is derived from the study of pathological conditions, so our understanding of what goes on when an individual reads a poem or a novel is illuminated by study of the causes for inadequate responses to literature. They can help us to recognize the basic fact that any sound response to literature is equally dependent on the quality of the reader's personal contribution. We do violence to a poem or a story when some obsession or blindness of ours clouds our vision of what the author has presented to us. We do justice to it when our own temperament and our own past experience permit us to see clearly

what the work itself offers, and to perceive its significance. Precisely because it appeals to certain elements in our own nature as our past experience has molded it, is the literary effect an intense one.

ONE CAN HAVE NO QUARREL with the fact that the attitudes and ideas the reader brings to literature are the result of his past experience. Our concern is rather that if the student's superstructure of ideas is built on too narrow a base, he should be helped to gain broader and deeper insight through literature itself. That is why our emphasis has been on the interaction between the reader and the literary work. When the reader becomes aware of the dynamic nature of that interaction, he may gain some critical consciousness of the strength or weaknesses of the emotional and intellectual equipment with which he approaches literature (and life). Since we interpret the book or poem in terms of our fund of past experiences, it is equally possible and necessary that we come to reinterpret our old sense of things in the light of this new literary experience, in the light of the new ways of thinking and feeling offered by the work of art. Only when this happens has there been a full interplay between book and reader, and hence a complete and rewarding literary experience.

The work of art can have this effect, we have seen, because it does more than merely recall to us elements out of our own past insights and emotions. It will present them in new patterns and new contexts. It will give them new resonance and make of them the basis

for new awarenesses and enriched understanding. It will tend to supplement and correct our own necessarily limited personal experience. Through the work of art, our habitual responses, our preoccupations and temperamental urges, may be given added significance. They will be related to the emotional and sensuous structure created by the author, and they will be brought into organic connection with broader and deeper streams of thought and feeling. Out of this will arise a wider perspective and a readjustment of the framework of values with which to meet further experiences in literature and in life.

These considerations reënforce the belief concerning the teacher's opportunities set forth at the end of Chapter 3. Given the fact that the personal contribution of the reader is an essential element in any vital reading of literature, progressive educators have been justified in their demand that we permit the student to have a spontaneous response to literature. But the preceding discussion makes more apparent the basis for our reminder that this pioneering demand represents only the first step, absolutely essential though that first step is. Given the spontaneous response of the student, the ground is merely cleared for creative teaching. There remains the further responsibility for enabling the student to handle with intelligence and discrimination the personal factors that enter into his reaction to books. Our object will be to help the student, through a critical scrutiny of his response to literary works, to understand and organize his personal attitudes and to gain

the knowledge and the sense of values that will enable him to respond more fully and more justly to the work of literature.

In this chapter, we have been concerned principally with some of the major preoccupations and needs that the adolescent may bring to literature and that he must develop the ability to understand and evaluate. The teacher who is sensitive to such personal and temperamental concerns will see how intimately involved he must become in the attempt to help his students to handle social, psychological, and ethical concepts such as we outlined at the very opening of our discussion. The next chapter will approach the problem of the clarification of the student's response more definitely in terms of the kinds of knowledge and technical information that will contribute to his further understanding of the literary work itself.

5

BROADENING THE FRAMEWORK

WE HAVE seen that a free exchange of ideas will lead each student to scrutinize his own sense of the literary work in the light of the others' opinions. The very fact that the other students stress things that he may not have noticed, or report a different general impression, will suggest that perhaps he has not done full justice to the work. He will turn to it again in order to point out the aspects that justify his opinions and to see what can justify the other students' responses.

The preceding discussion of adolescent concerns has dealt with some of the factors that lead the individual to be especially receptive to some of the stimuli offered by the literary work, to ignore others, or even "to read into it" implications for which there is no basis. All of this has assumed that, although any experience of a literary work must necessarily have personal significance, that personal response can be either more or less relevant to the work itself. In any teaching situation, an awareness of the student's preoccupations and emotional needs should therefore constantly be brought to bear upon the problem of insuring that the student has

responded to what is actually present in the literary work. The teacher's aim is to help the student receive the full sensuous, emotional, and intellectual impact of the work.

The student, then, must be led to seek a fuller understanding of the book or poem or play. Those who are least in sympathy with the point of view of our preceding chapters will probably maintain that in fact the only task of the teacher is to help the student understand what he has read and that therefore the teacher need not be concerned with the personal preoccupations or reactions of the students. The crux of the whole problem lies in the word *understand*. Our preceding chapter has demonstrated that "understanding" is a much more elaborate, involved, personal process than many of us are willing to admit.

We earlier rejected one oversimplified interpretation of understanding, when we spoke of the emptiness of a mere intellectualized definition of the meaning of a poem. We shall not help the student to understand if we keep him functioning merely on the plane of verbalization, of translation of the literary work into generalizations and abstractions. The ability to express the heart of an idea in clear terms that reveal its possible general application is indeed a rare and valuable one. But understanding does not begin on this level, certainly, nor does it necessarily culminate on this level.

Even if we take the word *understand* in a most limited sense, as it would apply to the definition of particular words, we find that we ultimately become involved in

elements of direct human experience that lead us on into all of the complex considerations concerning the social significance of English teaching. For we cannot readily "understand" a word unless we experience its implications in a context significant for human beings. It is true that in our everyday lives we often use words as mere empty counters swishing over the surface of the mind with little or no direct sense of the things or feelings or relationships between things to which they point. Thus it is that much of our speech and writing has only the vaguest of significance. When we are pulled up short and led to scrutinize what, in a specific and vivid sense, we meant to convey, we find that much is blank or amorphous. It is this very habit of mind that the English teacher seeks to counteract. Certainly this will not be achieved by translating one set of words thus vaguely sensed into another set equally devoid of sharp outline and vivid content.

If we wish to avoid mere verbalization, we must get the full impact of the sensuous, emotional as well as intellectual (by which we mean here the perception of abstract relationships or patterns) force of the word. This means that we must see to what in the world of man or nature the word points. We must be aware of the sensations it symbolizes, the systems or categories into which it fits, the complex of experiences or situations out of which it springs, the modes of feeling, the practical situations with which it is associated, the possibilities for actions or adjustments it may imply. Above all, we cannot understand the word itself if we view it in isolation. We

must see it in the variety of its possible contexts. Moreover, we must relate it to our own experience, in order that it may become part of our working equipment. Only then, as we place it in its relation to other sensations, ideas, attitudes, and patterns, all equally concretely realized, shall we be in a position to say that we "understand" it.

The word *love*, for instance, cannot be defined without reference to some context. The varied past experiences in life and literature which different individuals associate with the word, will also affect the way in which they "understand" it. The words *virtue*, *justice*, or *democracy* would represent a similar necessity for encroaching upon the whole framework of ethical and social implications. Here we find even so narrow an aim as the understanding of words leading us back to the field of human experiences. And in that process we become involved at once in all sorts of implied assertions concerning human nature and experience. In this vital sense, understanding demands a framework of ideas concerning man, nature, and society.

When we envisage the task of helping a student to understand a work of literature as a whole, we shall with equal inevitability be involved in the context of the student's past experience as well as in the historical, social, and ethical context into which he must fit the particular work. This will be true whether the work be "The Solitary Reaper" or *Paradise Lost*, *Hamlet* or *The Importance of Being Earnest*, *Evelina* or *Anna Karenina*. What does "understanding" mean, if it does not mean

fitting into what we already know and feel, the new experiences, the new insights, the new view of some phase of life, that the author presents? Whether or not we accept it as valid for ourselves, in order to understand his sense of life we must see how it is related to our own. Acceptance or rejection will be based on "understanding" only when there has been such a linking up with our own experiences and framework of ideas.

Every time an individual experiences a work of art, it is, in a sense, created anew. *Fundamentally, the process of understanding a work implies a recreation of it, an attempt to grasp completely all of the sensations and concepts through which the author seeks to convey the quality of his sense of life. Each of us must make a new synthesis of these elements with his own nature, but it is essential that he assimilate those elements of experience which the author has actually presented.*

Hence, even when we limit the teacher's function to the clarification of the student's understanding of the literary work, we find ourselves concerned with the student's personality and background, on the one hand, and on the other, with the whole range of facts, problems, and theories implied by the work. The student will not experience it (or understand it) in a vacuum. The heightened sensuous observation, the keener and subtler perception through literature of human emotions and activities, will not etch themselves on a blank page. There must take place an integration between the whole framework of interests, ideas, and feelings which the student brings, and the structure of ideas and emo-

tions offered by the literary work. As the student is led to clarify his own sense of it, we shall be able to point out to him the various kinds of knowledge that will enable him to disengage the special nature of the experiences offered by this particular work.

Thus, the clarification of our own personal understanding of the book or poem or play carries with it a responsibility to the work itself. We seek to recapture the emotional tone, the particular approach to nature or society, that dominates the work. We seek to disengage the particular kind of experience the author wished us to have—whether it be the stark terror of “The Pit and the Pendulum” or the sense of time and slow change of *The Old Wives’ Tale*. We try to detach ourselves sufficiently to see whether our own emphasis corresponds with what the author actually presented. We try to see whether the things that struck us most forcibly are the ones that he probably intended to place in the forefront. We look at the work more objectively to see whether we may not have failed to observe and understand certain phases of it—scenes, clues to character, or intangible things such as tone and atmosphere. The discovery of what we overlooked will be as valuable in revealing our own blind spots and emotional fixations as it will be in giving us a sounder participation in the work itself.

The import of any work will remain thoroughly personal, since it makes its impact upon a specific personality with its own sense of values. Thus there is not necessarily only one “correct” interpretation of the sig-

nificance of a given work. Not even the author's possible statement of his aims can be considered definitive, since the drama or poem or novel exists as a separate entity and can possess for us more values than he foresaw. The work must carry its own message to each of us. Nevertheless, the student should be led to discover that some interpretations are more defensible than others. A complex work such as *Hamlet* offers the basis for several interpretations; yet their acceptability will depend, first, on whether they take into account as many as possible of the elements actually present in the work, and second, on whether they do not imply elements which are not present in it.

An interpretation of *Hamlet*, no matter how subtle, that ignored his soliloquies or his conversations with his mother would obviously be inadequate. Similarly, an interpretation that assumed ideas and attitudes for which no evidence could be found in the text, or ignored the fact that the language has changed since Elizabethan times, would certainly be capricious. Thus, understanding of the work can be nourished through study of what is sometimes called "background materials."

An undistorted vision of the work of art requires a consciousness of one's own preconceptions and prejudices concerning the situations presented in the work, as they contrast with the basic attitudes toward life upon which the author has built. We have seen that only by liberation from the provincialism of our static responses could we remove the veils that dulled our perception of what the author had actually set before us. We at

least have the responsibility for realizing that we often are integrating the work into a context of psychological or moral theories different from those that the author probably possessed. Always, therefore, sound understanding of literature requires both a consciousness of our own personal "angle of refraction" and the knowledge of any information that can illuminate the author's intention.

THE STUDENTS WILL BENEFIT from their coöperative attempt to embrace all phases of the work in their formulation of its dominant effect. An example of this is a recent discussion of Keats' "The Eve of St. Agnes." A number of the students first spoke of the poem as a delightfully gay and ornamental story of romantic love. Others, accepting this characterization of the poem, condemned as irrelevant and jarring the introduction of the old Beadsman, the tombs, the cold chapel, in the opening of the poem, and the death of old Angela and the Beadsman at the end. The group found it necessary to decide what Keats' purpose had been in including these details. They reread the poem more carefully and decided that these elements served as an emotional background or undertone for the glowing colors and rich medieval atmosphere of the lover's story. The effect, they felt, was to enhance the warmth and sensuous vividness of the episode, to throw over it an atmosphere of remoteness in time and space, and to interweave with it the nostalgic minor theme of death and the passing away of all lovely things. This discussion was valuable for the

students because it stimulated them to attend to all of the elements, the minor chords as well as the major, presented by an author. Out of this came a fuller and more adequate response.

The clarification of the author's aim often plunges us, too, into innumerable considerations concerning human life and literary history. We may find it necessary to place the literary work in the context of the life and personality of the author. Particular crises in his life may confirm for us more definitely those things that we sense in his work. We may thus see how he arrived at the particular insight or mood or philosophy that characterizes it. Thus the students' discussion of "The Eve of St. Agnes" helped to make them aware of the presence in much of Keats' poetry of the nostalgic sense that

Ay, in the very temple of Delight
Veil'd Melancholy has her sovran shrine.

Then they sought in Keats' letters and in the story of his brief life as well as in his literary enthusiasms, the source of this feeling for the fleetingness of joy and beauty.

We may find it valuable, also, to see the writer as part of a literary tradition. Melodramatic or inconsistent elements in the form and plots of Shakespeare's plays may no longer trouble us when we place them in the setting of Elizabethan theatrical traditions. Similarly, the attempt to differentiate between the special type of sensibility of different members of the same literary movement, such as Wordsworth and Coleridge, or Keats and

Shelley, will heighten our perception of the special quality of the effects each sought to produce.

Thus the students may find themselves embarked upon a study of the biographical and literary background of the work. They will come to understand better the particular medium of expression that the author selected. They may see how reactions against the dead weight of literary tradition or the exhaustion of an earlier vein of literary sensibility, as in the case of Wordsworth, will have led him to his particular emphasis. By the very process of seeking to disengage the special aims and qualities of a literary work, the students will gain a profounder sense of the communal basis of even the most highly individualized human insights and emotions.

Our desire to understand a particular work, like a stone thrown into water, will produce ever widening circles of interest. Yet the center and the focus of these concerns will continue to be the student's own sense of the work and his desire to clarify and refine his perception of it. Knowledge about the author's life and the literary influences acting upon him will create the need for understanding the intellectual and philosophical, the social and economic, conditions surrounding them. If the work is not a contemporary one, the contrasts and similarities between the conditions of that past age and the present will illuminate ways in which our reaction to the work may depart from the author's intention. We may find that things particularly significant to his age no longer have such compelling qualities for us.

Robinson Crusoe is for us the absorbing tale of man's

ingenuity wresting a livelihood from nature; the account of his religious meditations and conversion is much less stirring. The much pitied Pamela may seem to the young girl of today merely a shrewd and designing hussy. Hamlet's perplexities concerning whether the Ghost may be a benevolent visitant, returned from Purgatory, or an evil spirit who has assumed his father's form, seem unimportant to us who question the existence of ghosts at all. Similarly, we may find that there is much in the work today which has special and hitherto unexploited overtones. Hamlet's hesitations and melancholy questionings in a world out of joint have a broad significance for us.

Here again, there will be profit in our seeing that our own reactions, like the work of art, are the organic expression not only of a particular individual, but also of a particular cultural setting. Literary history will not seem like a clear stream flowing between banks which enclose but do not affect it. Rather it will be seen that the literary stream is fed by thousands of rivulets which have their sources in the surrounding intellectual and social conditions.

THESE CONCENTRIC CIRCLES OF INTEREST focused on the student's sense of the particular work will involve him in still deeper concern with human relations. He will be discovering the particular values in life that the artist builds on. He will see in the work a specific reflection of general ideas concerning good and evil, concerning the desirable goals in life. He will work out the

scale of values that the writer applies to individual personalities and to relations between people. The student will apprehend Shakespeare's sense of the individual dominating even an adverse fate by the intensity and resonance of his nature. Or he will adjust to Jane Austen's "human scale," her characters measured against the background only of the society and the world they have created. Or he will share Hardy's sense of the individual as a helpless atom in the cosmic stream.

The student's own preoccupations will make him particularly interested in the characters and situations presented by the author. The writer does more than create for us human beings in action; he offers us clues to the motives and the repercussions of those actions. He shows us, too, many of the forces that shape human personality and conduct. Pamela's constant reference to the moral and social code differs greatly from Tom Jones' impulsive and uncalculating behavior. George Eliot and Thackeray, Aldous Huxley and D. H. Lawrence each gives us a different view of the determining traits of human character and personality. Often, too, the writer reveals the broader influences at work in man's collective life. Thackeray awakens our recognition of the force of social aspirations; Gissing and our contemporary proletarian writers show us the force of economic pressures; Emily Brontë and D. H. Lawrence, in different ways, remind us of the power of human impulse and passion. Out of our understanding of the individual sensibility or individual problems presented by the work there will thus also develop an understanding of the implicit basis

of the writer's system of values and sense of man's relation to the world.

This analysis of the work, this acquisition of new insights and information, will have value, it cannot be too often repeated, only as it is linked up with the student's own primary response to the work. His own judgment on it will thus be thrown into sharper relief. For if he is indeed functioning freely and spontaneously, we can predict that he will pass judgment not only on the work itself, but also on the problems it presents and on the personalities and actions of the characters. The attempt to work out the author's system of values and assumptions concerning man and society should stimulate the student to discover the unspoken assumptions behind his own judgment. For his conclusions concerning this particular work imply the general and unarticulated theories of human conduct and ideas of the good that shape his thinking.

In a spirit of friendly challenge, the teacher will lead the students to work out the implications of the positions that they have taken. They will come to see that often they may be making assertions based on fundamentally contradictory concepts. In this way a student who espoused with equal vigor the cause of Pamela and Tess, and maintained that each of them was "virtuous," found herself involved in working out some consistent understanding of that term. Becky Sharp and her humbler daughter, Scarlett O'Hara, led another student into similar difficulties. By bringing their own generalizations concerning life into the open, the students may be led

to feel the need of putting their mental house in order. They will see how often they have been dominated by ideas and standards only because they have heard them repeated again and again. They will develop a more critical, questioning attitude and will see the need for a more reasoned foundation for their thoughts and judgments, a more consistent system of values.

The teacher's challenge, as well as the challenge of the other students, will stimulate each of them to search for knowledge that will clarify the problems he encounters and will supply the basis for valid judgments. Here it is that the teacher of literature may legitimately feel it his function to point out to the student the existence of helpful bodies of information. He will have made a valuable contribution if the student leaves his experience of the literary work more eager to learn what the psychologist, the sociologist, and the historian have to offer him. The core of direct emotional experience at the heart of the process we have been describing will keep alive the sense of immediate personal value of the objective knowledge these experts offer.

This spontaneous turning to the other disciplines for information was illustrated by a group of freshmen in a woman's college who had read Ibsen's *A Doll's House*. One of the girls felt the play was profoundly insignificant, since "Nora was a fool to have become so dependent on her husband." Other students objected that she could do nothing else. You couldn't judge Nora, they pointed out, as you would a woman of today. Her relationship with her father and with Torvald reflected

the position of women in the nineteenth century. Yet even those who recognized the historical background of the play could give very little accurate information concerning the status of woman at that time. Realizing their ignorance, the students tried to find out what were woman's legal and political rights in the nineteenth century as contrasted with the present. They discovered the differences both in different periods, in different countries, and even in various states within the United States. They emphasized on the one hand the extent of woman's emancipation since the date of the play. On the other hand, they admitted that some of the problems it presented concerning the subordination of women still persisted. They were interested to discover also the extent to which the greater emancipation of women had transformed their relationships with husband and children. They even gave some attention to the economic influences at work at present that may tend to destroy much that has been already gained.

Although some of these considerations seemed remote from the play, there was nothing that the students learned that did not in some way deepen their sense of the play's significance. They tended to regard Nora no longer as an individual solving an individual problem. They considered her as the result and to a large extent the victim of a vast complex of conditions. They saw Torvald's attitude not merely as the expression of a dominating nature but also as motivated by the view of his rights sanctioned by the whole force of that society. Such a sense of the individual as the end product of a

great many factors rooted in the society about him is an extremely valuable insight. It helps to build up in the student's mind the habit of viewing people and situations from the broader perspective of their social context. The experience as a whole helped the students to see the value of suspending judgment until they had acquired a basis of information. From the teacher's point of view also, this episode was valuable. It emphasized the importance of having the desire for additional background information grow out of the students' grappling with their own reactions to the work.

At certain points in the discussion, the teacher had had pedantic twinges of conscience. The girls certainly were not always concerned with something that could be strictly defined as literature, and yet this was a "literature class." He later realized that he need have had no qualms. Out of the increased awareness of the complexities of human relationships, the students were led toward a fuller appreciation of the play itself. These new insights made some of the students more aware of Ibsen's dramatic methods. Quite spontaneously, they discussed the extraordinary economy of the means he used to convey significant information about Nora's past relations with her father and her husband. They pointed out the clear structure of the play with its swift and increasingly tense presentation of complex human problems and its skilful creation of suspense. The final scene, although it presented no real psychological or social solution, was judged to be theatrically effective both because it involved overt action and because it helped to make the

problem more clear cut. The students felt the importance of problems of form and technique, as well as of literary background, because these were relevant to questions they themselves had raised. There was nothing academically remote in these matters of form; the students saw them as intimately related to the insights that the author was trying to convey.

The process of attempting to see what the author has placed before us and to understand the scope of the author's intention will not follow the neatly marked out stages that have been followed here for purpose of exposition. (The frequent use of the future tense—"will"—implies, of course, hope rather than prophecy!) Nor has it been our object in this chapter to discuss in detail the various kinds of background information that may help the students to arrive at this understanding of the work. The value of such background materials is already recognized. Practically no course in Shakespeare, for instance, would neglect materials on the Elizabethan theatre or information about Elizabethan life to be derived from such a work as *Shakespeare's England*. Biographical materials also make up an accepted part of the study of the work of an author. Perhaps only recently has the relevance of sociological material been seen. And there are only slight beginnings of any recognition of the value of psychological materials. Our concern here, however, has been to emphasize the fact that the use and extension of the scope of such background information will have value only as it is assimilated into the student's experience of particular literary works. In that way, this

knowledge will become part of the improved equipment with which he meets both literature and life.

We are now in a better position to see the relation between the two phases of what we have called the dual process of clarification of the student's response to literature. When the student is challenged to examine the validity of his particular understanding of the work and his judgment on it, he will be stimulated, on the one hand, to study the work itself more closely, and on the other hand, to examine whether his own personal experience and basic assumptions provide a valid foundation for his interpretation. He will attempt to discover whether he has been aware of all that the literary work itself offers. This will lead him not only to seek further knowledge of literary forms and technique; it will also provide the impetus toward acquiring the various types of information—literary history, social history, biography, psychology—that may document his understanding of the work or that may help him to evaluate his own standards.

Such a process of assimilation and clarification will bring about a constant enrichment of the student's capacity to understand and appreciate literature. From this kind of literary experience and study, there will flow, too, an enhancement of the student's understanding of himself and the life about him. The coming chapters will study in greater detail how literary sensitivity may contribute to such increased human insight.

Part Three

LITERARY SENSITIVITY AS THE
BASIS FOR HUMAN INSIGHT

6

SOME BASIC SOCIAL CONCEPTS

HAVING developed the thesis announced in Chapter 1, that in order to increase literary understanding and appreciation, the English teacher must deal with human relations, we can now elaborate another point made in Chapter 1: Although English teachers need not be experts in the social sciences, they do have the responsibility (a) to become aware of their own assumptions concerning human nature and society and (b) to understand at least the important basic concepts of the present-day social sciences. We shall now attempt to clarify some of the assumptions about human relations that have been underlying our own discussion, and thus elucidate at least a few of the basic social-science concepts with which the English teacher should be familiar.

Thus far our emphasis has been on the importance of social insight for the development of literary sensitivity and judgment. In this part of our study, the emphasis will be changed. Our attention will center upon the other aspect of the reciprocal process—the contribution of literature to a fuller understanding of life. In this chapter, we shall turn our attention away from literature

itself to the approach to human relations that the literature teacher should share with all other teachers. It will then be possible to work out how literature can nourish this sense of human nature and society. Chapter 7 will deal with the influence that literary experiences may have on personality and conduct. Chapter 8 will illustrate further how the basic concepts of the social sciences illuminate, and can be illuminated by, the study of literature.

It has become an axiom of contemporary educational thought that, under the unprecedented and rapidly changing conditions of present-day life, to give the young person a rigid set of dogmatic ideas and habits is a certain method of producing insecurity and bewilderment. We of the older generation know that many of the habitual attitudes and ideas that we took most for granted have with changed conditions become inappropriate and even anti-social. We possessed much prized habits of thrift, only to have the economists ultimately tell us that the socially valuable rule is to spend, not save. Women dutifully restricted the scope of their interests to the home, only to find that the functions of the home itself had changed, and that as mothers, wives, and citizens they needed to develop broader interests and understanding. We absorbed the traditional belief that every American of any ability could rise above the economic and social stratum into which he was born and are now faced with the increasing rigidity of economic and class differences. We assimilated the doctrine that punitive measures would prevent crime, only to find the

social scientists asserting that the criminal is to be cured, not punished, and that he is merely the symptom of deep-seated weaknesses in our educational and social systems. In politics, in the relations between men and women, in the adjustments between parents and children, in all phases of our personal and social life, there have developed similar discrepancies between habitual attitudes and changed circumstances. Everything points toward an acceleration of such changes and readjustments during the lifetime of those who are adolescents and children today.

Obviously, a rigid set of dogmatic ideas and fixed habits of response to specific conditions is the worst kind of equipment for contemporary youth. As soon as actual conditions themselves prove that his passively acquired code is beside the point and useless or even harmful, the youth has nothing else to cling to. Having been made dependent upon ready-made props, he will be precipitated into painful insecurity. It is this kind of insecurity, this craving for some easy, reassuring formula, that makes the youth of other countries and sometimes of our own a ready prey to those enemies of democracy who hold out the delusive bait of ready-made solutions to all problems. Unprepared to think independently, the young man and woman seek to return to the infantile state in which there is no responsibility to make decisions; they are thus willing blindly to follow some "leader" whose tools and prey they become.

The conditions of human life, the complexities of the interaction of personality upon personality, the shifting

images offered by human history, and the rapid flux of the life about us today show how evasive of reality a dogmatic approach to human relations would be. Our literary heritage itself, with its reflections of the varied and contrasting forms human life and personality have taken, with its expression of so many different life goals and values, is eloquent rebuttal of any absolutistic approach to life. However satisfactory may be the system of values the teacher has worked out for himself, there is no proof that he is justified in "teaching" it to his students, as one might "teach" a method of solving a problem in calculus. For even if such an approach had been successful in the past—improbable though that is—there is no proof that the conditions of life this generation of students will face, or the highly diverse personal problems they will have to solve, will be commensurable with any arbitrary measuring rod provided by the teacher.

The teacher, however, must do more than merely avoid explicit dogmatism. He must also avoid the even more insidious unconscious inculcation of dogma. At the very outset of our consideration of these problems, we saw that the teacher cannot avoid transmitting some sort of attitudes. In spite of himself and though he may not consciously recognize them, he will, we believe, be subtly and indirectly conveying certain implied judgments, certain notions concerning what is valuable and what is undesirable. Only a mere bundle of miscellaneous and unintegrated responses—in other words, not a functioning individual at all—could evade conveying

some definite attitudes toward experience. The teacher will inevitably possess some scheme of values, some particular way of approaching and judging people and situations. It is important that he should bring these things directly into consciousness instead of imposing them indirectly and unconsciously upon his students.

Nor should the teacher try to pose as a completely objective, completely impartial person. The assumption of such a mask of unemotional objectivity or impartial omniscience is one of the reasons why teachers and college professors sometimes seem not quite human to their students. A much more wholesome educational situation is created when the teacher is a really live person, who is conscious of his own attitudes and assumptions and who states them frankly and honestly. He does not have to seem to possess "all the answers," which the students then need only passively absorb. Let him admit his own uncertainties and perplexities in such a way as to stimulate the students to enter actively with him into the common task of seeking the knowledge that may clarify these problems.

But even this consciousness of his own point of view and this frankness are not enough. The situation requires skilful handling. The teacher needs to see his own philosophy as only one of the possible approaches to life, from which his students should be given the opportunity to select for themselves. Tolerance of other points of view is extremely important for the teacher.

We rule out, therefore, the conscious or unconscious transmission of an explicit set of ready-made answers to

personal problems and ready-made judgments on people and society. *Yet this does not mean an end of the teacher's responsibility, nor does it imply a nihilistic approach to life.* Reluctance to impose a dogmatic philosophy may lead to an equally dangerous attitude of non-committal relativism that refuses to admit any standards and tends to produce a paralysis of judgment on the part of the student. Such pseudo-liberalism can give him only the feeling that there is nothing to believe, that there are no values to be sought in this confused world. In the long run, in times of crises or when the inevitable choices must be made, this would lead youth to fall back on the old, stereotyped attitudes, or to follow chance, irrational appeals.

Although no one code should be taught dogmatically, the need for the individual to work out his own code and his own hierarchy of values must be recognized. The task of education is to supply him with the tools, the knowledge, the mental habits, and the emotional impetus that will make possible a successful solution of his future problems. Hence the teacher must clarify in his own mind the basic approaches to experience and the basic concepts concerning human nature and society that will be a useful preparation for the adolescent facing the uncertain future. This has been the fundamental assumption underlying our entire preceding discussion.

In order that the student may be properly prepared for the trying demands that life will make upon him, our schools and universities must be transformed, as C. S. Peirce said many years ago, from "institutions for teach-

ing" into "institutions for learning." The student should go to school and to college, not for the purpose of being taught ready-made formulas and fixed attitudes, but in order that he may develop the will to learn. He must acquire command of techniques that make possible a constantly closer approximation to the truth, and he must develop *the flexibility of mind and temperament necessary for the translation of that sense of truth into actual behavior*. Instead of judgments accepted in whole cloth, he must acquire a curiosity concerning the causes of human actions and social conditions; he must be ready to revise accepted hypotheses in the light of new information; he must learn where to turn for this information. He needs, in short, to develop a dynamic sense of life, a feeling that an understanding of the causes may make possible a revision of resulting conditions. Instead of drifting blindly with the stream of circumstance, he will be able to set up more rational personal and social goals and to understand better the conditions under which they can be achieved.

The implication here is that the social sciences have something positive to offer us toward a solution of our own personal problems and toward the building up of a framework of ideas that will make possible constructive social action. In order to arouse in the student a desire for social understanding, the teacher of literature must himself be aware that such knowledge exists or that at any rate the foundation for such knowledge has already been laid by the social sciences.

The English teacher's responsibility toward the kind

of information represented by the social sciences can be summed up in two statements: (1) He should be aware of the existence of these various bodies of information and should possess a general understanding of what phases of man's life they treat. (2) Even though he may not have a detailed knowledge of these fields, he should at least understand their methods of approach and the basic concepts concerning man and society which they have developed. Without such knowledge he will probably be very effectively undoing in the English classroom whatever the teachers of social studies may have succeeded in accomplishing. Moreover, there is no reason why the English teacher's knowledge should stop at this minimum level. The training of English teachers should include much more study of the social sciences than it now does, and the practising teacher should recognize his responsibility for constantly adding to his knowledge in these fields as well as in the field of literature itself.

WE REALIZE THAT at this point we are striking at a widely prevalent professional prejudice. Teachers of literature and the arts often think of themselves as saving the student from the stultifying effects of our present scientific age. The early romantic opposition to the scientist as one who "murders to dissect" still lingers on. There is a tendency for the teachers of English to consider themselves the defenders of a lost cause, the keepers of an imaginative or emotional oasis in the midst of our materialistic, science-ridden life.

This attitude toward science is due to some extent to a prevalent confusion between the effects of science and the effect of the practical, materialistic emphasis of our society. It is not science, but the way in which it has been misused in our society, to which the English teacher should feel himself opposed. More and more evidence is accruing to demonstrate that science, properly exploited, might eventually liberate the whole mass of our people from the drudgery of mere money-getting for physical survival, so that they would have the leisure and the energy for the rich imaginative life that literature and the arts offer. Indeed, as Professor O. J. Campbell has said, our scientific heritage may soon provide an opportunity for even greater contributions on the part of the English teaching profession: ¹

Literature should not serve as a crutch for a crippled life, but as both energy and guide to an abundantly eager one. For this reason, intelligent reading will be one of the best employments for the greater leisure that in the near future is inevitably to be the possession of every sort of man. The dissemination of a sound taste in literature may thus be regarded as a very present social duty of our profession.

Even some of those who will admit this continue to assume, however, that there is a fundamental and irreconcilable opposition between science and literature.²

¹ O. J. Campbell, Ed. *The Teaching of College English*, English Monograph No. 3, National Council of Teachers of English (New York, D. Appleton-Century Co., 1936), p. 11.

² Another aspect of the literary person's antagonism to science is his reluctance to recognize that scientific works are often also works of literature. Cf. Huxley's *Man's Place in Nature*, Darwin's *Origin of Species*, Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, Eddington's *Stars and Atoms*, William James' *Principles of Psychology*.

These people are entirely ready to recognize the validity of scientific investigation of physical nature, but they will not admit that human nature can be subject to such investigation. It has become fashionable to stress the variety and complexity of human personality and human affairs as an insuperable obstacle to the application of scientific method. The disagreements and conflicts between different schools of thought are pointed to as proof. Only lack of contact with the finest and soundest expressions of the scientific spirit, however, could enable opponents of the social sciences to make these claims.

We must give this problem of the scientific approach to human personality and conduct rather elaborate consideration. An understanding of the spirit of scientific method and its application to human affairs is the most fundamental social concept which we believe the teacher of literature should possess. Even though he might not have a detailed knowledge of the social sciences, if he does have a lively sense of the essential nature of scientific method, he will surely give his students a dynamic and constructive approach to experience. In fact, we would go so far as to say that, without this basic understanding of the scientific attitude, any specific facts or theories drawn from the social sciences which he might introduce into discussions of literature would very likely be confusing rather than beneficial to his students.

The artist, we are reminded, always conveys to us the special quality, the peculiar attributes, the unique flavor, of some personality or situation. The scientist, his ar-

tistic opponents assert, reduces life to its lowest common denominators, and centers the student's attention on whatever in a particular object makes it like every other one of its class. The layman tends to think of the contribution of the scientist as being a body of laws or a system of classifications to be applied to nature and society. This on the surface would seem to negate the artistic approach to life, which seeks to individualize rather than to generalize. But this view of science does it gross injustice.

The wholesale application of broad categories, the lumping together of many personalities or situations under broad labels, the adoption of wholesale attitudes or sweeping judgments, are alien to the very spirit of science. Contemporary logic and theories of knowledge recognize the spontaneous quality of existence, the novel elements in nature, as much as do the arts. Part of the scientist's duty is to note in a given situation those factors that are unique or that are met here in new combinations which differentiate it from any other situations of the same type. Of course, the scientist recognizes that the human and physical world offers certain recurrent patterns, upon which can be built up theories concerning the correlation of their various elements. These theories, he hopes, will enable us to understand the consequences that will flow from particular combinations of qualities or events.

It is this desire of the scientist to work out fundamentally recurrent patterns that evidently has given rise to the idea that the scientific approach is inimical to the

artistic.³ We need to see how the scientist uses his generalizations or broad categories. These tentative generalizations are offered merely as a framework of ideas and guiding principles to apply to specific situations. This framework will help us to recognize in a given situation those elements that identify it as possessing a particular characteristic pattern. But these generalizations are equally important in helping us to see further wherein this situation is different from other situations. Thus we bring to bear upon it the results of past experience.

Now this process in no way violates the approach of the artist to life. For the artist is not only concerned with the unique. We have already remarked that if every author were entirely different from every other human being, and each of us were totally unique, there could be no art (and no communication) at all.

Fundamentally, our comprehension of the author's message must be based on the general or typical emotions or situations that are present in the work he is creating. At the same time, he seeks to give us its peculiar and special overtones, its subtle points of departure from the typical. For example, there is much

³ Unfortunately, the social scientists themselves are largely responsible for the prevalent misconception. Their tendency has been to formulate their theories in such a way that their meaning for human lives is obscured. Economists, sociologists, political theorists, historians, have too often developed a technical jargon that makes their findings seem remote from ordinary life. They must deal with mass movements, statistical data, the broad sweep of events; yet this should not entail the neglect of the individual human behavior and personal motivations that give rise to these social phenomena. The more creative thinkers in all of these fields, however, are aware of the human import of their work. We base our view of the social sciences on them and hope that it will be more and more generally operative. See also pp. 206 seq.

that is unusual in the personalities and situations presented in Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*; yet without the elements common to many human beings, no matter how specially combined in the character of Jude or Sue, and without the elements common to a society in which there are social and economic differences, we should not be able to understand the work at all. We usually are so intent on the peculiar qualities or the strangeness of the situation created by the artist that we do not recognize how much of what he is presenting helps us to build up ideas concerning the general or the characteristic. The point of view of the artist requires a recognition of recurrent patterns, paralleled by the recognition that every personality and every particular situation has its own unique qualities.

For the artist orders and classifies the data offered by life as much as does the scientist. The artist aims to make us experience imaginatively these common patterns and special qualities; the scientist seeks to discover a framework of ideas concerning what is general and what is unique that we may apply to such experiences. This framework of knowledge, these guiding principles, offered by the scientist are never irrelevant to the experience derived from either life or art.

SCIENCE STARTS WITH THE COMPLEXITY of human nature and society, but conquers the variety and intricacy of its subject-matter by working out fruitful principles of explanation for limited phases of it. *Divida et impera*, the old Roman principle for success in conquering enemies,

is the principle that science has used in overcoming the complexity of its materials. By approaching human affairs from different angles, anthropology, economics, psychology, and sociology have been able to discover a considerable body of facts that furnish the basis for a provisional understanding of human nature.

Often, the generalizations of the social sciences hold only for certain historical epochs, particular cultural areas and cultural patterns. This does not mean that the knowledge established is not valid within those limits. The scientist merely recognizes that his findings within these limited areas must be compared to findings drawn from other areas, such as other civilizations than the western. The scientist works out a certain hypothesis concerning human nature and society and then attempts to discover all the facts that will tend to prove or disprove it. He admits that his results are always tentative, that there are many gaps in his knowledge, and that new information may lead to the adoption of new theories.

A frequent complaint is that this very tentativeness of the scientific attitude makes it an extremely unsettling thing to offer the child or the adolescent. It is feared that they will be thrown into great mental insecurity by the fact that there is nothing which is absolutely certain, that all ideas are subject to future revision. Such insecurity arises evidently when the scientific spirit is not thoroughly presented. Though we should be prepared to relinquish our belief in any particular findings or conclusions of science, *we can still hold firmly to our faith in the scientific method itself.*

There is something inspiring about the fact that scientific knowledge is essentially a coöperative product. Only as a fact or as a theory is tested and verified by many competent minds, often widely scattered in time and space, does that fact or theory come to be accepted. The important thing is not that we find one generation rejecting a particular theory of psychology worked out by the preceding (just as we find the present generation substituting an Einsteinian for a Newtonian physics). Much more important is the fact that there are innumerable minds all over the world working upon these problems, building upon what others have done before them, and contributing, each in his own way, to a greater approximation toward the truth. Instead of bringing up our young people to base their security upon the idea of absolute certainty, a belief which we know will lead only to disillusionment and insecurity, we should teach them to place their faith in this vision of the coöperative striving toward greater and greater exactitude and universality, that is the essence of the scientific spirit.⁴

⁴ "What is science? The dictionary will say that it is systematized knowledge. Dictionary definitions, however, are too apt to repose upon derivations; which is as much as to say that they neglect too much the later steps in the evolution of meanings. Mere knowledge, though it be systematized, may be a dead memory; while by science we all habitually mean a living and growing body of truth. . . . That which constitutes science, then, is not so much correct conclusions, as it is a correct method. But the method of science is itself a scientific result. It did not spring out of the brain of a beginner: it was a historic attainment and a scientific achievement. So that not even this method ought to be regarded as essential to the beginnings of science. That which is essential, however, is the scientific spirit, which is determined not to rest satisfied with existing opinions, but to press on to the real truth of nature. To

Based on the fullest information available, critically tested, scientific knowledge is our safest guide. Furthermore, we should recognize that the social sciences already offer much that can be assimilated into the fabric of our everyday life. If they do not provide rigid yardsticks for action, it is precisely because the scientific spirit stresses the need for understanding the special conditions that qualify any particular situation. We must take advantage of the things that the social sciences can already tell us about the various factors involved in any of our problems. We shall thus be better able to understand their typical as well as their special characteristics and shall therefore handle our problems more intelligently and more successfully.

This readiness to utilize the insights which man's collective endeavors have thus far attained, and this dynamic sense of truth, this understanding of the flexible, questing nature of the scientific spirit, are the concepts to which the teacher of literature should cling.

WE STRESS THESE BROAD CONSIDERATIONS because if they are thoroughly assimilated, they will protect the literary specialist from the danger of a routine and dogmatic application of scientific theories or scientific terminology. Nothing is more pathetic, and probably dangerous, than that bane of all discussions concerning human beings (and a particular bane of much so-called educational

science once enthroned in this sense, among any people, science in every other sense is heir apparent." Charles Sanders Peirce, *Collected Papers* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1935), Vol. VI, p. 302.

theory)—the use of a scientific jargon that masks from the speaker and the listener their lack of real understanding.

An illustration of this type of misuse of science is the employment of the jargon of psychological terminology. Recall, for instance, those people who swallowed the Freudian or Adlerian theory unquestioningly and who used their various categories loosely and lavishly. Accepting such labels as the *Oedipus fixation* or the *inferiority complex*, they felt evidently that they had clarified their understanding of a personality when they had applied one of these labels to it. Their facile use of such terms merely revealed their lack of understanding of the psychoanalytic approach itself. Any of the accounts of particular analyses recorded by Freud or his disciples reflects their sense of how special each case is. The operation of any such general emotional patterns as the Oedipus fixation or the inferiority complex differs in its particulars in each case. Even the recognition of these broad, typical patterns was arrived at only after prolonged study of the specific cases.⁵ Having determined the general pattern, the analyst's concern was to see how it had worked itself out in terms of the particular personality and the particular situation in which the person found himself. Only in this way, not by a mere

⁵ In fact, this recognition of human variability and the need for an ever broader base for generalization explains the more critical psychiatrists' current revision of their theories in the light of a study of other cultures. Cf. Karen Horney, *The Neurotic Personality of Our Time* (New York, W. W. Norton, 1937); James S. Plant, *Personality and the Cultural Pattern* (New York, The Commonwealth Fund, 1937); John Dollard, *Criteria for the Life History* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1935).

process of labeling, could the psychiatrist offer any help. We might have taken our illustration with equal validity from the misuse of the terminology of the other social sciences, such as the nineteenth-century use of *the survival of the fittest* or the indiscriminate application of phrases, such as *the law of supply and demand*, *the class struggle* (economics), *the relativity of morals* (anthropology), *evolution and progress* (sociology), or *the inevitable decay of civilizations* (Spenglerian history).

When we remind the teacher of literature that he is inevitably dealing with psychological problems, we are not arguing that he should settle down to learn all of the systems of classification of human types or all of the theories of behavior that the various schools of psychology may have worked out. Nor do we mean that the discussion of literature should be necessarily at all concerned with psychological classifications or terminology. Suppose a student docilely learned to classify literary characters according to whether they were extraverts or introverts, or according to whether they showed signs of an inferiority complex, or according to whether their actions fitted into, let us say, McDougall's theory of instincts. Does it seem likely that such a student would be much better off than one who had passively learned to think in terms of "the good people" and "the bad people" or to classify them as types, such as "the gossip," "the bully," "the old maid," or who might have been led to consider them only as "Aryan" and "non-Aryan"? Any rigid *a priori* classification used

in this way becomes merely an obstacle to understanding people. It leads the student to pay attention only to the things stressed by his own particular system of classification. As soon as he has labeled people, he feels relieved of any further obligation to get at their inner qualities, to understand their special motivation, or to observe as many as possible of the factors that may enter into the external conditions influencing them.

Hence it is much less important that the teacher of literature should be acquainted with all of the current psychological systems than that he should be conversant with the spirit of psychological inquiry. If the teacher, himself, espouses any one school of psychology (and that might give his teaching at least a consistency that the remarks about "human nature" uttered in most literature courses unfortunately lack), he should be willing to recognize the existence of other schools and the student's right to know about them. For if the student is given a sense of the approach to human nature out of which psychological inquiry springs, he will be ready and eager to go on to seek from the psychologists themselves the tentative answers they offer to his particular problems.

The same principle holds for the other social sciences. The teacher of literature needs to convey the spirit of scrupulous inquiry and the flexible approach which is their characteristic. His contribution may be phrased largely in negative terms; he will not impose a dogmatic framework upon the concept of "human nature"; he will not allow conventional assumptions to go un-

challenged; he will not permit his students to fall back upon pat, stereotyped formulas. In positive terms, he will awaken his students to an awareness of the complexity of human behavior and society and will stimulate them to seek the understanding that the social scientists are endeavoring to establish. He will share the psychologist's belief that knowledge concerning human nature must be the result of careful, controlled observation, that any hypothesis must be tested and retested, and that we must be particularly on our guard against imputing to human beings those traits or those psychological mechanisms that would justify or rationalize our own habitual method of dealing with them.

WHAT, THEN, ARE SOME of the basic concepts that the teacher of literature should draw from the social sciences? What are these attitudes that should permeate the discussion of human nature and human experience growing out of the reading of literature? Perhaps an economical way of dealing with these questions within the limits of a chapter will be to start with certain ideas that often appear in the student's thinking and with which the English teacher must therefore deal. Using these current conceptions as starting points, we shall be able to see what light the scientific approach can offer. In this way, our discussion will have direct bearing upon the problems that our readers constantly face in the classroom. Even though we shall not be able to march in orderly fashion through the whole series of ideas basic to the scientific study of human nature and society, we

may succeed, at least, in indicating the way in which certain of these concepts can function in ordinary thinking about people and society. Our object will be to illustrate further what we have stated concerning the scientific spirit and to demonstrate what we mean by stressing the value of a firm hold on certain fundamental concepts rather than on specific rigid theories. In other words, we are concerned with seeing these concepts as they can be brought to bear upon current attitudes.

Let us start with one of the most glaring of the widespread assumptions encountered in students' reactions to literature: the traditional voluntaristic conception of human nature and conduct mentioned briefly in the first chapter. This view, we remarked, is based on the idea that any behavior can be interpreted as having been willed by the actor. The assumption is that in all situations, the individual is free to accept or reject various types of behavior. If a person is pleasant or unpleasant, social or anti-social, it is largely because he wishes to be so. One needs only to know the "rules," the commandments of the society about one, in order to be provided with a guide to one's own conduct and a code for sitting in judgment on one's fellow-men. Although, stated thus baldly, these assumptions seem almost to condemn themselves, this view of human nature still dominates the average man's thinking. We see this reflected in his actual judgments on people, in the kinds of laws passed to regulate or to punish them, or in the attitudes of society toward whole groups of people, such as members of minority races or the unemployed. Because this

point of view so thoroughly permeates our social atmosphere, we shall take it as the starting point from which to consider the significance of some of the basic concepts of the social sciences.

Scientific investigation and analysis, particularly in the fields of psychology, sociology, and anthropology, have been slowly undermining this oversimplified theory of human nature and conduct. The plasticity of the human creature is being recognized. His actions, his choices, his very personality, are seen as often the results, not of some direct action of his will, but rather of external forces acting upon him. The human personality is not thought of by the scientist as a fixed series of traits that the individual is born with but rather as a complex of qualities and habits which are the end result of a great many different forces converging upon and interacting with the individual organism. The innate physical and mental endowments of the individual are not ignored. It is being more and more admitted, however, that the individual, as we meet him functioning in society, is the product of the particular ways in which these innate elements have been molded, stimulated, or repressed, by external conditions.

The conception of the child as a little savage, whose rebellious will must be broken and who must be coerced into civilized ways, is now considered erroneous. Equally mythical is the romantic conception of the child as an unspoiled angel who is corrupted into the ways of the world as its "prison walls" close about him. Instead, the human creature is seen to possess potentialities for an

infinite variety of behavior. The particular circumstances into which he is born, the temperaments which act upon him in his earlier years, the particular kinds of stimulation or repression to which he is subjected, and the satisfactions or frustrations which he meets will have a powerful influence in patterning the mental and physical potentialities with which he is born.

Present-day psychology is devoting a great deal of attention to attempting to discover significant forces that contribute to the molding of the personality. These forces are attributed differing degrees of importance by the various schools of psychology. Some focus their attention upon such seemingly external factors as methods of feeding during babyhood. Others stress more the emotional relationships with the parents and with brothers and sisters as important factors in patterning the child's personality. Still others stress the environment in which the child grows up; the economic conditions which surround him, whether he lives in a slum or in circumstances of wealth, whether his environment permits unhampered activity, or whether, as in the city slums, he is forced to seek an outlet for his energy often in destructive and underhand activities.

No matter which aspect of the forces acting upon the child is stressed, and no matter how much contemporary schools of psychology may differ concerning the methods, behavioristic or introspective, of studying the individual, they share this basic approach to human development. The behavior, the emotional patterns, the ideas and dominant drives that make up a personality,

are seen as the result of a process by which the particular mental and emotional habits are, so to speak, learned. Thus, a particular temperament or a particular action cannot be judged in itself. It has to be seen in relation to the whole stream of the individual's life, the various influences to which he has been subjected, the situations and events through which he has passed. This does not eliminate the concept of the will. But it does mean that we have to get back of any particular action to see what set "the will" in one direction rather than in another.

This view of the plasticity of human nature has been reënforced by the sociologists and the anthropologists, attacking the problem from other angles. The sociologists show us how the child acquires from its immediate environment, and particularly from the family group, not only such things as physical mannerisms, habits of gesture, language, but also emotional habits and major ideas concerning behavior. Similarly, the particular social group of which the child is a part again contributes certain elements to its personality patterns and its mental and emotional habits. We have already mentioned one illustration of how the ideas and attitudes of the surrounding society are incorporated into the individual personality in the reference to the process by which we acquire from the cultural environment ideas of what constitutes masculinity and femininity. These mold the individual's own behavior and his expectations concerning the behavior of others. In the same way, all of the patterns of feeling and behavior, all of the expectations

and values that constitute the content of the individual's personality and his sense of life, are built up.

In our own heterogeneous society, this concept of the influence of the family and social environment upon the individual is particularly important. We are beginning to realize that in our highly complex civilization, people may be the products of practically different sub-cultures. In our cities, for instance, we find people who superficially seem to be conforming to the ways of life of the average city dweller, and yet who, coming from different parts of the country and from different family, social, and economic backgrounds, may be motivated by entirely different conceptions of personal relationships. The young couple who have met and married in the city may represent the conjunction of two different cultural patterns; the young husband coming from a small New England town with its leisurely tempo and thrifty, disciplined, undemonstrative way of life will have very different images of behavior from his wife who may have grown up in the easy-going atmosphere of a boom town of the West, where emotions are readily expressed, where heartiness and vigorous action are valued more than discipline and decorum. Or they may have very different images of what constitutes the family, one perhaps used to a household in which several generations shared their activities and their pleasures and troubles, and the other thinking of the family in terms of the biological unit of parents and children, seeing all others as outsiders toward whom no responsibility need be felt.

Beyond such broad patterning factors exists an even more complex and perhaps even more powerful set of influences. The boy who has grown up as the subject of the excessive care and emotional attentions of a doting mother may seek in any other relationships as, for instance, in marriage, similar cherishing protection and emotional dependence. This may be so powerful as to prevent his assuming the emotional responsibilities that are usually associated with marriage and parenthood.

THE ANTHROPOLOGISTS HAVE CONTRIBUTED still another and broader framework within which to place this basic concept of psychological conditioning. By studying a great variety of societies or, to use the anthropological term, *cultures*, they have revealed the amazing diversity of patterns into which man has poured his personal and group life. About the fundamental activities of food-getting, propagation, child-rearing, have been developed modes of behavior, types of personal relationships, ideas of good and evil, religious beliefs, social organizations, economic and political mechanisms, which result in cultures that seem to have practically nothing in common.

Some cultures may organize their economic life on the basis of the individualism of the Eskimo, or on the basis of the economic communalism and coöperative activities of the Zuni. Kinship may be reckoned according to matrilineal or patrilineal lines. The family may be organized on the basis of the biological unit of parents and children, or on the system whereby a whole com-

munity constitutes the family group, or in such a way that the child looks to his mother's brother as his guardian and protector rather than his biological father. One folk may people the universe about them with malevolent spirits, another with benign spirits. Ethical codes may be set up that require the ruthless taking of human life, or that deem it an unpardonable sin, or as in our own society, that make the taking of human life at times sinful murder and at other times (in war) a glorious social deed.

One culture may make the generous bestowal of one's property upon others the means of social prestige, or as in our own society, prestige may depend upon the ability to accumulate and retain possessions. Some peoples may rear their children from the earliest age as a functioning part of the economic and social group, as among the Samoans; others may let them grow up almost completely outside the adult pattern, as among the Manus; or still others, as among the Batciga, may let them create an organized "child society" of their own. We might take each item of any possible social and personal relationship within a culture and discover that various other groups had erected not only contrasting and contradictory but almost incommensurable ideas and arrangements. Everything, from the structure of language or the ways of measuring time or indicating direction, to social and economic organizations or ethical and religious codes, will reveal this extraordinary capacity of the human race to create on the basis of the biological needs of the individual and the group an amazing diversity of cultures.

In terms of the individual, this implies, of course, that his personality, his needs and aims, will be molded by the particular cultural group in which he has been reared. Each culture tends to stimulate or nourish certain aspects of personality and to repress others. There would be a great difference in the resulting personality, according to whether a particular human organism, whatever its innate tendencies, was born into a cultural pattern that values gentleness, moderation, and coöperativeness, or into a culture that values aggressiveness, violence, and individualism. In one society the pugnacious, acquisitive man will be an admired leader; in another society he will be a misfit or an outcast. Everything from physical traits to the ability to dream dreams and see visions may receive different valuations in different cultures. An illustration of this from within our own cultural stream is the social value placed by medieval society upon the mystics or seers of visions as opposed to our present-day interpretation of them as abnormal or queer. In other words, what is considered the approved or "normal" temperament or behavior in one culture, or even at one epoch in a civilization, may be disapproved of as queer and abnormal in another.

The anthropological approach to the concept of normality is particularly useful to those teachers who deal with adolescents, since evidently this is a problem which troubles many of them. The anthropologist shows us that after all the "normal" is whatever society has designated as such. Different societies have placed the range of normality very differently in the scale of temperaments

or types of behavior of which the human creature is potentially capable. We need to recognize how powerful a hold the norms of our own group have on us. We need to understand the cause of our extreme discomfort—and of the strong disapproval of others—when we depart appreciably from those norms. The important thing to recognize is that, whatever the concept of the normal, it is to a certain extent the result of historical causes, that ideas of normality have changed from country to country and from age to age, and that therefore our own ideas of the normal have no particular divine sanction.

Teachers sometimes fear that such a sense of the cultural “relativity of norms” will be unsettling to the adolescent. Will he not feel that there are no standards—that anything, any kind of behavior, is “as good” as any other? This, of course, is an attitude of mind that could lead only to moral and intellectual chaos, and we should be careful to guard against it. Such a conclusion, however, can arise only out of a stress on one part of the anthropological facts. For if anthropology shows us the diversity of norms, it also shows us how closely any particular standard of personality and behavior is related to the whole framework of the culture.

The concept of the relativity of standards must be related to the anthropologists’ emphasis on the need for seeing the culture as a whole. They remind us that we must avoid the tendency to think of different phases of society as distinct and unrelated. The ideas concerning physical beauty or attitudes toward property or the possession of intuitive powers in any one society will tend

to be colored by certain underlying drives, certain basic ways of envisaging human nature, certain values that permeate all phases of the culture.

All the miscellaneous behavior directed toward getting a living, mating, warring, and worshipping the gods, is made over into consistent patterns in accordance with unconscious canons of choice that develop within the culture. Some cultures, like some periods of art, fail of such integration, and about many others we know too little to understand the motives that actuate them. But cultures at every level of complexity, even the simplest, have achieved it.⁶

Hence, we must not view in isolation any set of standards in our own or any other society but must seek the basic values or drives in the culture that tend to reënforce those standards. The individual will be liberated from blind subservience to the norms of his group, not by throwing overboard all standards, but by seeing them in relation to the whole complex of attitudes and values into which they fit.

Thus, it was not enough for women to resent the norms set up by the Victorian image of the submissive, self-effacing female. They had to learn in what ways this image was linked with economic dependence and the habits of mind derived from acceptance of political and intellectual authoritarianism. It is not enough for the artist to chafe at the indifference or scorn of the average American. When the artist sees that indifference as a corollary of the dominant emphasis upon aggressive action and money-getting, he is ready to inquire into the

⁶ Ruth Benedict, *Patterns of Culture* (Boston, Houghton Mifflin Co., 1934), p. 48.

historical sources and economic and social causes of these dominant attitudes. The very fact that our society places such emphasis upon being an average "good fellow," the fact that so often our college professors consciously seek to look and talk like solid business men, the fact that we are so painfully aware of any unusual individuality in dress or belief, requires similar explanation. How often is personality or achievement valued according to its translatability into terms of potential income? To what extent are these dominant attitudes being qualified by recognition of the value of contributions to general social welfare?

If we consider the norms concerning the relations between husband and wife, or parents and children, for example, we must again see how pervasive are the fundamental drives of our culture. The institution of the family, which concentrates within itself so many economic and social functions, will necessarily be affected by the emphasis on material possessions or the extent to which coöperation or rugged individualism is socially approved. Thus, it is futile to discuss recent changes in family relations or to forecast their future development without considering recent economic and social changes or what possible direction our whole society will take. If we are going in the direction of greater valuation of individual personality, family relations will be very different from what they would be if we moved toward approval of conformity and the suppression of the individual.

Far from furthering the rejection of all standards, an

understanding of cultural conditioning illuminates the intimate relation between individual lives and the whole social fabric. The adolescent is thus provided with a broader perspective from which to view his own struggle to conform to the dominant norms. He must live within the framework of our own culture, of course. But he need no longer give blind and unthinking adherence to its images of success.

Moreover, he can be liberated from submission to excessively narrow standards that may be imposed by the limited environment in which he finds himself. One of the interesting things about our society is its heterogeneity, the number of cultural sub-patterns that exist side by side. If the youth is brought up in some limited geographic or social setting, or if he is aware only of the most generally accepted standards, he may be equally in danger of too narrow a view of what is socially approved. Adolescents often need to be liberated from these excessively narrow ideas. Our society is so complex that it includes many groups that set up different images of the approved kinds of temperament, behavior, or social success. Often the individual born within one of these groups and measuring himself against its particular norms develops a feeling of inferiority which would disappear if he could become aware of the standards developed by other groups.

THE PRECEDING DISCUSSION has already led us to a consideration of another aspect of the problem of personality development. The starting point is a fact that we

have already mentioned, namely, that any culture produces individuals who deviate more or less from the approved images. Early childhood experiences and the particular society within which the individual finds himself set certain general patterns, it is true, but after all, the experience of no two people, not even of two children within the same family, is identical. That fact, in itself, would lead us to expect a diversity of personalities, even if we were not to consider the possible factor of congenital differences. Moreover, as we have said, every society permits a certain, greater or lesser, degree of acceptable variation.

The study of the influences acting on the individual is also concerned, therefore, with the attempt to see at what points or in what ways the personality becomes crystallized. Despite the original plasticity of the human creature, once the personality pattern is formed, once definite emotional and mental habits are set up, there seems to be a certain resistance to change on the part of the personality. Present-day psychology, particularly the psychoanalytic school, places this formation of basic tendencies and mechanisms in the personality at an early point in the individual's development. If any broadening or remolding of the personality is attempted, it therefore becomes necessary to penetrate to these deep-laid strata of feeling and habit. The argument of our next chapter reflects the influence of this emphasis in present-day psychology.

When the basic personality pattern is set, it determines the way in which the individual interacts with his en-

vironment, accepting one or another of the choices it leaves open to him, submitting to or resisting its various pressures. Thus the rugged individualist (who has become this through interaction with the family and social environment) may resist any pressure toward coöperative activities that might be set up by others in the society who have developed a drive toward collective action. To that extent each will be helping to mold his environment and to fix the surrounding social system.

This aspect of the study of personality prevents us from falling into the view directly opposed to the voluntaristic one, but equally erroneous: namely, that the individual is merely a kind of automaton entirely at the mercy of external pressures. Too often the young person is given only one side of the picture. He is encouraged to think of man either as an entirely free agent or as the helpless pawn in a completely deterministic system.

Our concept of cultural conditioning in no way implies a fatalistic notion that man is merely a puppet in the hands of some mythical, external power called the "environment" or the "culture." The anthropologists present rather the concept of the human organism as interacting with the cultural environment. It is true that the individual, the human being, cannot be thought of as a biological organism existing in a vacuum and completely determining from within the form of its own development. Every child is born into some kind of social environment, which immediately exerts a patterning influence. This concept must be associated, however, with the concept of the individual reacting upon the

physical and cultural environment and hence reënforcing or modifying it. It is in such terms that we can conceive the process of conscious cultural change. The more conscious the individual is of the nature of the cultural forces with which he is interacting, the more intelligently can he accept or resist them, and the more intelligently can he modify their power and their direction.⁷

The influence of the cultural environment can be envisaged somewhat as setting the broad limits within which the individual can develop, and within which he has freedom of choice. This may apply to choices revealed in his physical and temperamental development, or it may apply to such choices as whether he will read a new book or mow the lawn, as well as such decisions as whether he will attempt to change the surrounding economic order through the advocacy of new laws. In other words, in terms of his own temperamental bent, he can accept or resist the dominant pressures, or can choose one line of behavior rather than another.

The more unthinkingly and mechanically the individual follows the particular patterns set for him by his particular environment, the nearer he approaches the state of the automaton. If the individual becomes aware of the important molding influences in his own past and

⁷ The psychoanalysts utilize the same principle in their technique of helping the individual to gain an insight into the nature and influence of his past experiences. When these are brought into his consciousness and their relation to his present anxieties and obsessions is understood, he becomes capable of dealing with them rationally, and is thus enabled to remold or readjust his personality. This analogy was pointed out by Lawrence K. Frank in a letter to the writer.

in the history of mankind, if he becomes aware of alternative types of social patterns, or of alternative types of happiness, he will be better able to make choices, to dominate, and if necessary, to remold his environment. Thus he will be in a position actually to exercise his "will" and to influence consciously his own future and the future of the society about him.

The anthropologist and the psychologist offer a critical approach to another widespread attitude of mind: the tendency to accept the familiar or the traditional as possessing a fundamental rightness and, conversely, the tendency to consider the strange and the unfamiliar as necessarily inferior or reprehensible. Since the individual absorbs unconsciously the particular modes of behavior, views of human nature, social and economic arrangement, of the culture into which he is born, he takes them for granted and often cannot even imagine any possible alternatives or variations. Hence, when he does encounter another cultural pattern, as when the white man comes into contact with the African or the Samoan, he tends to look upon it as inferior. An extreme illustration of this tendency is the fact that many primitive peoples have as the name for their cultural group only the word in their language which means "human being." Any who do not belong to their cultural group automatically fall outside that category.

In the present-day world, we can find many further illustrations of this same psychological tendency: the perennial idea that "the world is going to the dogs" because ways of life are deviating from the traditional; the

often accompanying assumption that the present stage in history is in all respects necessarily superior to any phase of past societies; the ridicule or moral indignation aroused by the suggestion of new rôles or behavior for, let us say, women (for example, the reactions to woman suffrage or to women in the professions). The worship of the familiar is undoubtedly one of the banes of our present-day world, masking itself as race prejudice or expressing itself in the national egoism and ruthless nationalistic aggression of governments such as the Italian, German, and Japanese.

The anthropologist helps us to realize that merely because we have grown up in a particular cultural pattern, we have no legitimate basis for considering it, *ipso facto*, the only possible, or even best possible, pattern. There is much to be gained from the knowledge that other cultures have developed smoothly working alternatives to the customs and institutions with which we are familiar. Similarly, we can compare the particular ethical and social ideals of our culture with those created by other cultures or other possible cultures.

We have seen that different societies set up different images of the most highly desirable human satisfactions—as in the contrast cited above between those valuing competitive violence and those valuing peaceful, co-operative behavior. We discover that societies differ also in the degree to which their various institutions and customs make the valued satisfactions either more or less easily attainable. Sometimes there is a decided discrepancy between those two aspects of a culture. An example

of the gradual elimination of such a discrepancy can be drawn from our own society: during the past few generations, the situation in which sexual experience was valued, yet a frustrating atmosphere of guilt or shame was cast about it, has been giving way to a situation in which the satisfaction of this strong culturally reënforced need is not accompanied by culturally imposed feelings of guilt and shame. Another example from our own society: individual self-determination, freedom of thought and speech, and self-respect are values which have received cultural sanction and which have therefore become needs for which the individual craves satisfaction. Our political institutions are designed to fulfil these demands, but it is becoming increasingly apparent that certain of our social and economic institutions tend to create, in the lives of many people, conditions that frustrate these demands.

We can judge the society about us, then, in terms, first, of the kinds of basic satisfactions it values, and second, in terms of the degree to which it permits or stifles the attainment of those satisfactions. Our self-consciousness about our cultural pattern means that we no longer need accept it as unthinkingly as the air we breathe. Probably more than any other cultural group before, we can hope consciously to influence the future development of our customs and institutions.

THE ANTHROPOLOGISTS' STRESS on the concept of cultural integration can counteract another current habit of thought: the tendency to think of different groups in our

society or of different phases of the society as distinct and unrelated. We live in so complex a civilization that we forget that anything affecting one element in it, whether that be a geographic or economic section, or a particular group, such as women and children, or a class of workers, such as teachers or coal miners, will tend to have repercussions upon the other groups or sections of the society. If we set up the pattern of ruthless individualism and competition in our economic life, we may expect that these ways of feeling and acting will reappear in other phases of our cultural life.⁸

This theory concerning the interaction between different aspects of the culture has been given a special interpretation by those who believe that man's economic life—his particular methods of food-getting, manufacture, distribution of goods, and property regulation—tends to determine the nature of all the other aspects of his life, such as social organization, religion, and art. We cannot here launch into an adequate discussion of the theory of economic determinism. It seems safe to say that, whether or not the economic is considered the sole

⁸ The concept of the cultural pattern is particularly rich in implications for the study of literature. Through literature we are constantly coming into contact with cultural patterns of the past or of other societies. Often, literature gives clear expression to the characteristic ways of feeling, the types of temperament and behavior valued by the society as a whole. It would be unfortunate if, in the study of literature, the student were permitted to forget that man's life is lived in a web of cross-currents that tend to take on a basic pattern. Literature itself cannot be viewed in isolation from other aspects of man's activity in society. Moreover, the particular images of life presented in literature should be approached with a sense of complexity of man's life and an awareness of its tendency to reflect some dominant pattern. These questions will be discussed more fully in Chapter 8.

or basic patterning factor, social scientists in general recognize that it is an extremely important one. Economic influences do play such an important part in our own capitalistic society that we certainly must pay particular attention to this concept. The distribution of wealth among various classes in our society will have its repercussions in a great many different phases of life. It was not, for instance, accident that the type of fiction represented by the novels of Richardson, Fielding, and their literary descendants began to flourish at the time when the middle class in England was attaining increasing economic power. Moreover, the particular economic group from which a writer springs surely plays some part in his view of life, his sense of values, and his particular choice of subjects. The teacher of literature, like any other student of the products of man's social life, cannot afford to ignore economic influences.

IN THE PRECEDING PAGES we have sketched only a few of the topics that enter into the problem of the patterning of human personality and human society. We have not even broached a great many subjects and considerations which are live concerns of present-day social scientists. In psychology, for instance, we have not touched upon that center of much new illumination and controversy, the Freudian theories concerning the rôle of unconscious processes and the ways in which they find expression. In anthropology, we have not considered the studies tending to undermine belief in racial superiority or inferiority; we have not discussed the problems that enter into

an understanding of cultural change. In sociology, we have not mentioned such things as studies of different social groups and social processes at work in our own society. In economics, much that is important to any understanding of our own lives or the lives of others is being formulated: an understanding of the results of increasing industrialization, the tendencies toward increasing concentration of wealth in the hands of a few, the maladjustments and suffering attendant upon the cyclic nature of unregulated, competitive enterprise.

Our object here has rather been to suggest the general way in which an acquaintance with certain basic concepts in psychology, sociology, and anthropology would have a direct bearing upon the subject of human personality and conduct—a subject that is an integral part of any consideration of literature. We noted on the one hand how far the social sciences have departed from the voluntaristic notions concerning human conduct and personality. On the other hand, we have seen how their findings can free us from too naïve an acceptance of the divine rightness of the particular customs and institutions that our own cultural group has happened to develop. Thus we can turn to the literature of other ages and other societies with an open mind, and we can look upon the expressions of our own age with critical freedom.

Given the cultural tendency to perpetuate the traditional (a reflection of the psychological tendency to cling to crystallized habits), it is not surprising that the older approaches to human nature and society are being

sloughed off very slowly. Even those who have come into contact with the newer theory often fail to assimilate it into their attitudes and judgments in actual life. In their personal relationships they are still dominated by automatically absorbed prejudices and expectations. Our marriage consultation bureaus, for instance, reveal that often relationships are shattered by the inability of each of the partners to recognize the causes of the behavior they dislike. The reaction is entirely one of rejection and blame. There is no sense that behavior grows out of a complex network of factors, some of them environmental, some physical, and some the result of emotional attitudes and habits whose source is in the early psychic frustrations of the individual. What is needed is an attempt to understand the possible origins of the disapproved behavior, in order that by the modification of these causes, a changed external situation and temperamental readjustments may be brought about. Each person fails also to understand his own motivations, and to see that perhaps his own resentments and irritations may be due to certain factors in his environment or past history which have no validity in themselves.

In other words, in place of the acceptance of behavior on its face value, there should be substituted a frame of mind which seeks to understand the factors that generate this behavior. Given such habits of mind, the possibility of the adjustment of different personalities to one another is greatly enhanced. Such an approach might also tend to prevent people from entering into relationships in which there were fundamental elements that would

probably lead to misunderstanding and maladjustment.

On all sides, nevertheless, the student is still being bombarded with expressions of the old approach to people and affairs. In the newspaper, in the moving pictures, in our governmental practices, in our law courts, and above all in the average home itself, this view prevails. Because the weight of environmental pressure is decidedly toward the student adopting this older and less constructive view of human nature, it is particularly important that any phase of his educational experience that is concerned with human relations should present forcibly to him the attitudes growing out of the newer approach to personality. The potential influence of the teacher of English is therefore considerable. Only if the teacher is himself imbued with this more reasoned approach to human personality and society, will he be able to help the student to build up the attitudes toward people that the mental hygienists have demonstrated to be the most constructive. Instead of the old defeatist notion that "human nature is what it is and will never be changed," there will arise for youth the hopeful vision of life as potentially flexible and of human nature as the result of many forces that can be modified and directed.

WHENEVER WE IMPLY that the insights offered by the social sciences may be a means to more successful living or to a redirection of life or a remolding of society, we are impinging upon the problem of values. We have already in Chapter 1 found it necessary to refer briefly to this phase of thinking. For as the moralists or the opponents

of science are so eager to remind us, science may give us the facts, but it cannot give us the standards of what is desirable or undesirable, of what is good or evil. Indeed, scientific knowledge may be put to uses that are clearly, from certain points of view, anti-social. Illustrations are the use of chemical knowledge to invent poison gases or the application of psychological knowledge to advertising that creates a demand for things in themselves useless or harmful.

The social sciences, then, are slowly building up a body of knowledge concerning important factors in the development of human personality and in the patterning of human society. But where shall we turn for some scale of values that will help us to judge what kinds of personality and what kind of society are desirable?

This problem does not consciously present itself to great masses of people (and they include many of the "educated"). They have acquired most unthinkingly from the cultural atmosphere their ideas concerning desirable and undesirable ends, concerning moral or immoral acts, concerning acceptable or unacceptable social arrangements. In other words, they are completely guided by the dominant system of values assimilated from their environment. Hence almost automatically they have at their disposal a yardstick by which to measure their own and others' conduct and a basis for rejecting any personal or general social arrangements that in any way deviate from the customary.

One of our underlying assumptions is that such unthinking acceptance of any scale of values is undesirable.

Here at once the contribution of the social sciences is apparent. The anthropologist, the historian, and the sociologist (as well as the philosopher) point out that many alternative systems of values are possible; this constitutes a challenge to inquire as objectively as possible into the varying effects of these different social and moral codes upon the human beings whose lives are regulated by them.

Those who find the task of working out their own philosophy too difficult; those who are not sufficiently mature to assume the responsibility for their own choice of goals or moral code, turn to authority—to some institution such as the church, or to some individual such as a dictator. Comfortable as this throwing over of the burden of decision might seem to be, again the social sciences reveal that institutions often tend merely to re-enforce and to crystallize the particular customs and traditional values built up by the past. They are not necessarily safe guides in a changing world. In fact, their historic tendency seems often to be to stand in the way of any readjustment of old values to new conditions. Hence a blind following of their postulates may lead to painful maladjustment and conflict. Thus, within these institutions themselves, as, for instance, in the churches today, there is need for individuals who have sufficient perspective to stand off and view the traditionally perpetuated codes and to see at what points they are irrelevant to changed conditions and perhaps defeat the very ends of human happiness or social peace for which they first were formulated.

Again we are thrown back upon the necessity for finding some fundamental principle of value upon which to erect our moral codes and social philosophies. In this, we shall again be functioning as individuals within our own particular culture. The codes or philosophies that we set up must have relevance to the particular world in which we live. The students of other societies will give us information concerning those traits in human personality, those types of cultural arrangements, that other cultural groups may have developed. The historians of philosophy will explain to us the various systems of value that men have worked out in the past or in our present age. And the original philosophers of today will be offering us additional possibilities. Obviously, our ultimate choice will be influenced by all these things, and particularly by those philosophies that have directly contributed to our own cultural stream. Certainly, present-day attempts to solve this problem of values would be very different if the Greek and the Judaeo-Christian philosophies, or the ethical theories built up by feudal and capitalistic social organizations, were not part of our cultural heritage.

The individual's choice of values will necessarily be in terms of the conditions of the society in which he finds himself. He will tend to choose between those alternative schemes of value which his own culture has produced. The very fact that he reacts forcibly against some of the philosophies or points of view that he encounters in the life about him will lead him to empha-

size those values and ideals which they neglect. Anything that we shall say, therefore, concerning a fundamental principle of value will necessarily be phrased in terms relevant to our own society.

Even though we recognize the fact that there is nothing divinely absolute about any system of values that we may set up, we need not respect it any the less. What we can expect of ourselves is that this system should be arrived at through conscious reflection and that its consequences in terms of human life should be envisaged as clearly as possible. And we must always, as we have said, avoid inculcating our standards dogmatically.

One such basic value judgment has been implied throughout our entire discussion: Any phase of life, any cultural mechanism, any custom or institution, any forms of conduct, should be measured in terms of their actual effect on the individual personalities that go to make up our society. To use the culturally sanctioned terminology, every human being is entitled to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." This means that the human being is recognized as having value in himself and that anything which reduces him to the status of a mere thing, instrument, or automaton is condemned. This also sets up as an ideal that social situation in which each member of society is given the opportunity for the greatest fulfilment of those culturally valued satisfactions of which he is potentially capable. The corollary of this, of course, is that if a conflict of interests should arise, no one individual, or no group of

individuals, would be justified in gaining their own satisfactions at the expense of the stunting or exploitation of any other individuals or groups.

This rests upon the belief in the fundamental dignity and worth of the human being. It sets up the well-being and fulfilment of the individual in opposition to any abstractions for which might be claimed a superior reality or value, such as the State, the Nation, the Race, the Elect, the Heroes, or the Supermen. This basic postulate of value is obviously one which receives reënforcement from many elements present in our cultural heritage. It is implicit in various religious philosophies and in the democratic philosophy, as it applies not only to our political but also to our social and economic life.

Given this fundamental principle by which to measure our own lives and the lives of those about us, as well as the customs and institutions, the ideas and assumptions which make up our own culture, we shall find a means for utilizing and applying the knowledge which the scientists are so laboriously coöperating to acquire. Often, only the scientist can tell us what is best for man's physical and mental health. All of the sciences that propose to study man as a biological organism and as a social creature slowly are becoming aware of their common function, their responsibility to contribute to this core of knowledge concerning the factors that enter into the creation of freely and fully functioning human beings. Thus the physician is beginning to find that he cannot think of man as a biological organism in a vacuum but must concern himself with the particular social and

economic setting within which that biological organism functions. Medicine itself, therefore, once we set up our humanitarian criterion, can give us information by which to accept or reject, to reënforce or to modify man's physical and social environment. The sociologist, studying man's behavior under the varying conditions created by our social and economic system, again can give us information that can be judged in terms of successful or unsuccessful human lives. The psychologists also reveal increasing awareness of the fact that the psychology of the individual is part of what is known as social psychology. Various specialists in the field of mental hygiene have already reached the point of being dissatisfied merely to readjust scattered individuals among the increasing numbers who are known to be suffering from nervous maladjustment and disorder. On the basis of psychiatric study of these individuals, mental hygiene will be better and better able to tell us at what points our particular cultural pattern sets up deep psychic disturbances or stifles and condemns fundamental human drives. In the field of psychology, too, this point of view of preventative therapy will develop a body of information by which we can apply the basic value judgment indicated above. We shall probably be increasingly able to judge the degree to which our particular cultural pattern satisfies the requirement that it permit the greatest possible fulfilment and enrichment of human lives. Then, too, the students of our economic system are giving us information about the actual functioning of our methods of production and distribution and our regula-

tions concerning property, which can be utilized in the effort to eliminate the arrangements and practices that defeat humanitarian aims.

Those of us who are principally students or practitioners of an art, such as literature, can also place our own knowledge and interests within the context of this broader system of values. We have already had occasion to remind ourselves of the satisfactions that the creation and enjoyment of the arts yield. Surely it is hardly necessary to speak of the desirability of making available to all at least the opportunity for the joy that artistic activity and the experience of art offer. Moreover, as we have seen, the artist can tell us much about man himself. Many of the subtler potentialities of human feelings and behavior that could have been given common utterance in no other way are revealed and embodied in artistic form.

Given the fundamental values of democracy and of the dignity and the worth of the human being, we must reiterate our belief in freedom for the artist. For not only does the artist give expression to innumerable facets of the life about him. He also has often in the past served an important function by recalling his fellow-men to a sense of basic human needs, when they tended to forget them under the sway of destructive symbols and slogans or under the compulsion of materialistic ambitions. We must be ready to demand for our artists the opportunity for this kind of critical activity. And we must be willing to let our young people become acquainted with those works of art that do reveal weak-

nesses in contemporary life or that create a vision of new human values.

BEFORE WE PROCEED to consider in the next chapter the ways in which the experience of literature may be carried over into actual behavior, we need to see our problem in the context of the general ideas and values that we have been discussing. After all, why should the school or college be so much concerned with the development of emotional attitudes or with preparing the student for his personal as well as his broader social relationships? Are there not many other social agencies concerned with precisely these problems? Indeed, have we not just considered how the surrounding cultural atmosphere, the family and community environment, permeate and mold the personality? We saw that the individual unconsciously absorbs from his relations with people in the home and community environment the culturally accepted images of behavior, the powerful culturally sanctioned emotional drives which later dominate his own actions and what he expects of others. Why then place this additional burden upon the school, which in our society already has so large a task merely in giving information and developing skills? Why, above all, involve literature, which offers experiences that would be precious in themselves even if they had no further practical justification?

The answer is that we are educating generations of young people who will have to meet conditions and problems very different from those their parents and

grandparents faced. During periods of relative stability or extremely slow social change, the home and the community could be relied upon to furnish the emotional conditioning and to inculcate the attitudes that would automatically fit the kind of society which the child was eventually to enter. At no time, of course, has the school been entirely free from the responsibility of influencing character and mental habits. In a stable society, however, that influence would be principally an automatic reënforcement of attitudes acquired by the child outside the school. Within this framework, the school could devote itself principally to the business of factual instruction and the development of the student's mechanical or linguistic skills.

It can no longer be assumed that present-day conditions will necessarily provide the young person with the habits of mind and images of behavior that will be appropriate to future social conditions. Again and again, we have been forced to recall that the development of an industrial society, with all its changes in methods of production, in ways of earning a livelihood, and in even the simplest details of everyday life, has produced a welter of new relationships and new images of the values to be sought for. The multiplicity of alternative choices in personal relations and in social philosophy is particularly characteristic of our American society. The old habitual responses, the old images of what is to be taken for granted in relations between people, can no longer be followed unquestioningly. Many of the old attitudes continue, of course, to be valid. No matter how

drastic and revolutionary social change may seem, the anthropologist will remind us that the new elements are infinitesimal in comparison with the mass of cultural attitudes that persist. Nevertheless, failure to readjust emotionally and intellectually to the changed social situation can produce much unhappiness and frustration. This has been demonstrated throughout the past century and a half, which has largely been a long period of readjustment in political, economic, and personal relationships. The accompanying social upheavals and personal unhappiness have been attributed, in large part, to the tenacious clinging to old attitudes and assumptions no longer appropriate to changed conditions.

Since the old attitudes, the old habits of response, the old goals and images of success can no longer be automatically relied upon, youth must be prepared for an unprecedented self-consciousness in the choice of their patterns of life. They must be prepared to test and perhaps to modify the emotional responses which their childhood environment transmits to them from the past. The home or the community, whose educational influence operates principally in undirected and unconscious ways, cannot be expected to do this alone. The school, therefore, must step in deliberately to give the child that kind of preparation.

More than ever before, we need to develop individuals sufficiently mature to assume the responsibility for working out their own solutions and making their own judgments. The concept of "maturity" is a major concern of the mental hygienists. They see in our failure

to develop a population of mature, self-reliant individuals, the explanation of much of the unhappiness, the frustrations, the cruelties, often characteristic of personal relationships in our society. The same lack of emotional maturity explains many of the weaknesses in the functioning of our democratic system of government. The individual who is still in the infantile state of needing an outside authority to make his decisions for him, or who demands from his mate the type of response and reassurance that children crave, cannot be expected to build up successful personal relationships or to participate constructively in the creation of a rational society.

The concept of "mental security" is closely related to this problem of maturity. Because of the fact that the surrounding intellectual and social atmosphere is in such a state of flux and confusion, the youth needs help in working out his own intellectual and emotional security. Once a greater measure of economic security has been achieved for society as a whole, one great source of nervous tension and uncertainty will have been eliminated. Meanwhile, the individual must be able to maintain his own balance and must build for himself a mental and emotional base from which to view the fluctuating currents about him. A sense of the fundamental reliability of the scientific method and a firm hold on such basic human values as we have been suggesting can do much to counteract the prevailing sense of uncertainty and conflict.

But there is another source of security that each individual in our culture should be able to draw upon.

It is a kind of security that the mental hygienists tell us depends very much upon the individual's childhood experiences. If the child has been given a feeling of being wanted and loved, if he has been able to feel that he is an accepted member of the family and social group, he will tend to develop the kind of inner security that will enable him to meet constructively much of the external insecurity and struggle of later life. If, on the other hand, he is not given this early assurance of affection and acceptance, if he is made to feel inadequate, wicked, or queer, he will develop feelings of guilt and fear. These anxieties will not necessarily be admitted into his conscious life, but they will nevertheless color his sense of himself and the attitudes with which he meets the people and the life about him. The mental insecurity due to a subconscious feeling of being worthless or guilty or inadequate may express itself in antagonism and hostility to others and in the need for the external weapons of intellectual dogma and physical force with which to meet the threat of life.

Those of us who are parents and teachers must be aware of the far-reaching influence that we can have on the child's personality development. Above all, it is our responsibility to give the child a sense of being loved and valued. He should not be made to feel guilty because he is a child and therefore cannot always live up to adult demands; life should not consist for him principally in a formidable series of rules and prohibitions against which he is naturally a sinner who must be punished. Throughout the whole course of his home

and school life, he should be given the feeling that he as a person is worthy of consideration. One of the values of our image of the relationship to be fostered between the adolescent and literature, for example, is that it would give him a sense of the validity of his own personality and of his own personal response to experience.

These problems of maturity and mental security are much too complex to be treated adequately here. They have implications that involve our whole economic and social set-up, as well as the methods of child-rearing in the home and the fundamental characteristics of our educational system. A recognition of the importance of this problem, however, reënforces one of the main ideas upon which the foregoing chapters have been based. It has been assumed throughout that although we must never force upon the student subject-matter and materials beyond his intellectual and emotional level of comprehension, we must, on the other hand, permit him as much as possible the fullest emotional and intellectual functioning of which he is capable.

Particularly in the adolescent years, students are often confined to too childish a plane of thought and feeling. They too frequently are encouraged to sit back and passively accept what the teacher wishes them to think and feel, without becoming aware of themselves as personalities with definite patterns of their own. Our emphasis on the importance of the personal relationship between the student and the literary work, which grew out of an attempt to understand the literary experience

realistically, had back of it this broader concern with the need for fostering the individual's attainment of greater maturity. Much more useful to the adolescent than any fixed notions of rigid codes will be the capacity for flexibility, for a plastic approach to experience.

THIS TASK OF DEVELOPING intellectual flexibility through liberation from blind emotional prejudice has received much attention from present-day educators, particularly in such fields as history, sociology, and psychology. The process of liberation has been based principally on the development of an objective, scientific understanding of the nature and the sources of the old attitudes. The student has been shown that these attitudes grew out of social and economic conditions now rapidly disappearing. He has seen that images of behavior and assumptions concerning society that he has taken most unquestioningly for granted are the product of conditions that no longer exist. He has thus become aware of the disparity between these accepted notions and present-day reality.

The social scientists—the historian, the sociologist, the economist, the psychologist—deal with subjects about which cling strongly emotional culturally transmitted attitudes. Political and economic questions, topics involving racial or national prejudices, or such matters as the relations between parents and children, or husband and wife, almost automatically arouse strong feeling. The social scientist must therefore clear the ground for

rational discussion by first eliminating or reducing any prejudices or fixed emotional attitudes that may obscure a clear view of the facts. The aim has been to seek an unemotional treatment of these explosive subjects. The general effect has been to "de-emotionalize" not only the scholarly investigations in the social sciences but also the teaching in those fields.

The object of the social-science teacher is, most validly, to bring the student under the dominance of the scientific spirit. The means by which this is to be accomplished is another matter. One may question whether plunging the student at once into abstract considerations of generalized social conditions and problems is the best way to lead him to adopt a scientific approach to individual life and to society. We have spoken earlier of the tendency of the human mind to deal with words as empty counters, to brush lightly over their surface meanings, without any vivid perception of the actual material and emotional elements to which they point. This abstracting, generalizing, and devivifying tendency may be merely strengthened by the type of materials dealt with in the usual social-science courses. In reading his psychology textbooks, for instance, the student may tend to dissociate the theories or phenomena he studies from the thought of any actual human beings. In his history classes, mass movements and national changes may be thought of without ever translating them into terms of the individual human lives that went to make up these vast historical sums. The information drawn from sociology and economics courses may be kept

equally on the plane of the general and the impersonal.⁹

If the purpose of the social-science courses in high school and in college were solely to give information, complete objectivity might be an end in itself. The assumption underlying the teaching of such courses, however, seems to imply a more practical aim than information for its own sake. The object seems rather to give the young boy and girl such understanding as will enable them to handle better their own observations and experiences. Is it not assumed that a comprehension of the forces at work in the society about them may help them to play a more socially useful rôle? Therefore, without abandoning the emphasis on objective scientific knowledge, the educator still has to inquire whether such understanding is being conveyed in a form that will affect social attitudes and influence social behavior.

Our aim is to enable the student to make intelligent judgments. In the alternative choices open to him, he needs to be guided, not by the blind reflex of unconsciously absorbed prejudices, but by ideas based on scientifically valid facts. Can the unemotional, impersonal recital of facts and the objective scientific analysis of problems be counted on in themselves to give the

⁹ This tendency to deal with abstractions called "social forces" apart from any sense of the human beings who embody these forces may explain why so many adolescents seem to have derived only a pessimistic view of the individual and society from their social studies. They have developed the feeling that the individual is merely an impotent puppet at the mercy of inexorable "forces." This result might largely be averted through a more human presentation of social theory. This is an illustration of the extent to which the so-called "form" in which ideas are presented actually determines the meaning that they will have for the student.

young person the power of rational choice? Will the information thus acquired outweigh the force of irrational attitudes absorbed from the lagging social atmosphere? In its simplest terms, the question is: Will this objective knowledge affect his actions, inside and outside the school today, and will it influence his actions in later adult life as a member of a family and as a member of a national and world community?

Investigations of changes in attitudes resulting, for example, from courses in the social sciences, have usually proved nothing more than that the students changed their articulate opinions. They no longer echoed jingoistic sentiments but approved international coöperation; they advocated racial tolerance; they rejected the "devil take the hindmost" theory in favor of the idea of community responsibility. Whether these opinions had struck deep enough to affect emotional response and actual conduct under the pressure of practical circumstances is another highly debatable matter, and a question seldom investigated.

Impersonally presented information, thoroughly understood, may undoubtedly influence behavior. For one thing, there are types of minds that respond most readily to abstract ideas. Yet, even in this case, those abstract ideas are practically worthless unless the student is led to recognize their application to specific, concrete situations. The fact remains, moreover, that the influence of this type of impersonal, factual instruction is not as obviously visible or as profound as one might hope. How often even our high-school and college graduates seem

unable to resist the pull of popular catchwords, specious appeals to conventional emotions or the contagion of mob feeling!

It must not be forgotten that the student—no matter whether he is a young child or a college boy soon to enter adult life—is already functioning in society. He has to make choices; he must set up goals for himself in his daily life; he must develop a sense of values. And these demands he will continue to meet throughout his life. The pressure of actual living does not permit prolonged meditation and analysis precisely in those person-to-person and general social situations where such reflection is most needed. Hence in moments of indecision, the emotionally rooted attitudes come to the surface to guide behavior.

The young man in school or at college may have become thoroughly acquainted in his courses in history or sociology with, for instance, the more modern ideas concerning woman's potential equality with man. He may even have become convinced of the desirability of the new ideal of marriage as a partnership and a mutual give and take, in which sometimes one and sometimes the other will be dependent or dominant. The success with which he carries out his program for a modern marriage, however, will largely depend on the degree to which these intellectual convictions have been translated into emotional attitudes and have displaced the old automatic sets. Certainly, from his family background and many other sources in the society about him, he would earlier have absorbed the image of

woman as weaker, more dependent, more emotional than man. He is still being indoctrinated with this image daily in the society about him. If these older, deeply ingrained images still persist, he will unconsciously demand those qualities from the women with whom he comes in contact. He may often find himself irritated at the absence of the conventional feminine qualities in his mate. Particularly in moments of tension, the older culturally weighted attitudes will tend to assert themselves. He may find himself seeking the sense of dominance and superiority associated with the early acquired image of the husband.

When such moments of conflict and irritation arise, they can be handled successfully only if he is able to recognize his emotional reaction as the irrational following of deeply grooved patterns which may be no longer justifiable. In order to overcome this, he must possess some strong emotional impulsion toward the achieving of the kind of marriage that his reason approves.

The gap between the individual's intellectual perceptions on the one hand and his emotional attitudes on the other must be bridged over. If such a linkage of opinion with the emotional springs of action does not occur, there are two dangers. First, in moments of crisis the individual may be dominated, not by his rationally worked out opinions, but by the no longer appropriate attitudes absorbed from his childhood environment. Or, if the critical point of view has succeeded in breaking down the old attitude, he may be capable of only a negative approach to the situation. To revert to our

illustration, the family: have we not all encountered the "emancipated" man or woman, whose only attitude toward marriage was a sense of all the things it must *not* be?

The objective study of man in society must do more than illustrate the absence of a valid basis for many of the attitudes and images surviving from former social conditions. There should also be provided a valid emotional basis upon which to build more appropriate and more successful patterns of thought and of behavior. Only then can we be sure that the present knowledge concerning man and society will bear fruit in more rational social development and in happier, more effective human beings.

This second phase of the problem, the transmutation of scientific knowledge and critical opinion into emotional attitudes guiding behavior, has usually been either neglected or evaded by the social-science teacher as well as by the others. Obviously it offers difficulties and even some possibilities of abuse. Yet to go on blithely with our objective "de-emotionalized" procedures is a betrayal of our own sense of the practical value of social understanding. We are leaving the young boy or girl still emotionally under the sway of outworn compulsions, and hence a ready victim of the emotional appeals made by less scrupulous, less disinterested social agencies, such as the biased press or partisan groups. The cause of youth's confusion and sense of futility today is often that they recognize the inadequacy of the old images and yet lack any clearly felt emotional drive

toward new choices and new patterns of behavior. The new images and social goals must be given sufficient emotional sanction to carry our young people through to a more successful solution of their day-to-day problems.

The task of education in our present era of social change includes, in sum, this twofold challenge:

1. To supply youth with the tools and knowledge necessary for a scientifically objective, critical appraisal of accepted opinion, in order that they may be liberated from anachronistic emotional attitudes destructive of human values
2. To help such emancipated youth create new emotional drives strong enough to counteract outmoded automatic responses and predispose the individual toward working out a basis for more fruitful living

This problem is fundamental for our whole educational system. Not only the content of particular subject-matter teaching but the character of the whole school community is involved. If the school, for example, is based on the principle of unquestioning obedience to authority—both in relations between teachers and students, and in relations between teachers and administrators—we cannot reasonably expect the development of people capable of functioning intelligently in a democracy. These are broader concerns that we teachers of literature share with all educators. Recognizing our responsibilities, we should judge whether the general educational system within which we find ourselves furthers or frustrates these wider democratic aims, as well

as our particular aims for the development of literary sensitivity.

The potential contribution of literature is our specific concern here. How does this approach to human relations operate in the teaching of literature? How can the study of literature impart the kind of understanding of human nature and society outlined in the preceding pages? How can literary experiences serve to advance the broad aims of education for democracy?

7

PERSONALITY

IT IS our thesis that literary materials—the poem, the short story, the novel, the drama, and by extension, the moving picture—can contribute powerfully to both phases of the twofold educational process that we have outlined. Back of all that we are about to suggest lies the belief that ¹ “the really important things in the education of youth cannot be taught in the formal didactic manner; they are things which are experienced, absorbed, accepted, incorporated into the personality through emotional and esthetic experiences.”

Of all the elements which enter into the educational process—except, of course, the actual personal relationships and activities which make up the community life of the school—literature possesses greatest potentialities for that kind of direct assimilation of ideas and attitudes. For literature offers the closest approach to the experiences of actual life. It enables the youth to “live through” much that in abstract terms would be meaningless to him. He comes to know intimately, more in-

¹ Lawrence K. Frank, “Some Aspects of Education for Home and Family Life,” *Journal of Home Economics*, Vol. 23, No. 3 (March, 1931), p. 214.

timately perhaps than would be possible in actual life, many personalities. He shares vicariously their struggles and perplexities and achievements. He becomes a part of strange environments, or he sees with new emotions the conditions and the lives about him. And these vicarious experiences have at least something of the warmth and color and emotion that life itself possesses.

Vicarious experience through literature, it has been seen, is the result of a highly personal process. Any insight or clarification the youth derives from the literary work will grow out of its relevance to certain facets of his emotional or intellectual nature. And the whole personality tends to become involved in the literary experience. This fact that a literary work may bring into play and be related to profoundly personal needs and preoccupations makes it a powerful potential educational force. For it is these personal factors which make up the fund of basic needs and attitudes out of which behavior springs. Because the literary experience penetrates to the core of personality, because it affects both thought and feeling as they are organically intermingled, *literature can be an important means of bringing about the linkage between intellectual perception and emotional drive that we have agreed to be essential to any vital learning process.*

At the outset of our discussion, we declared that the success of any educational process must be judged in terms of its effect on the actual life of the student; the ultimate value of any knowledge depends on its assimilation into the very marrow of personality. We must now

apply this standard to our own suggestions: What are the results in terms of personality and behavior to be expected from the kind of literary experience and training that we have defined as desirable?

This question will be answered first in the light of the individual student's relation to books. The present chapter will thus deal with the potential influence on personality inherent in literary experiences themselves. Chapter 8 will then apply this question to the type of literature study outlined in the first half of this book. Both of these chapters will reflect the view of personality development sketched in the preceding chapter, and will indicate how an awareness of the suggested general approach to human relations may grow out of the experience and study of literature.

We are now venturing on ground that is thorny with unexplored difficulties. Much emotion has been expended upon this problem of the influence of literature, but little careful or controlled study has been made of it. The following discussion is offered principally for the purpose of focusing attention on this extremely important problem. Our aim is to arouse an increased awareness of some of the elements that enter into this question, rather than to suggest a set of neat formulas. As teachers themselves become aware of the dynamic and complex nature of the literary experience, and as students of literature give it added attention, a body of more accurate information on this phase of the problem will slowly be built up.

If we keep this view of the interaction between the

individual mind and the literary work in the center of our attention, we shall not be misled into thinking that only books read in most solemn and pedantic manner for edification will have an influence. The power of literature to offer entertainment and recreation is, despite the pedants and moralists, still its prime reason for survival. Books read solely for entertainment satisfy, after all, definite needs and answer definite preoccupations. Such works have therefore a potential capacity to influence the reader's personality and behavior, perhaps even more than those he may read in the course of the school or classroom routine.

It may be a rather oppressive thought, yet we cannot evade it, that everything that we do or experience, even in our lightest moments, may leave its lasting impression upon that complex of habits and feelings that go to make up personality. In the discussion that follows concerning the possible influence of literature, we are therefore not concerned merely with those works studied in school but are envisaging any writings that elicit a vivid personal response from the young reader.

PROLONGED CONTACT WITH LITERATURE may result in increased social sensitivity. Through poems and stories and plays, the child becomes aware of the complex personalities of other people. He develops a stronger tendency to notice the reactions of others to his own behavior. He learns imaginatively to "put himself into the place of the other fellow." He becomes better able to foresee the possible repercussions of his own actions

in the life of others. In his daily relations with other people, such sensitivity is precious. The person who causes greatest pain to others is often one who is so dominated by his own emotions that he is blind to many of the human factors that enter into a situation. Through literature the individual may develop the habit of sensing the subtle interactions of temperament upon temperament; he may come to understand the needs and aspirations of others; and he may thus make more successful adjustments in his daily relations with them.

This increased ability to imagine the human implications of any situation is equally important for the individual in his broader political and social relationships. Many of our greatest political blunders or social injustices are the result not so much of maliciousness or conscious cruelty as of the inability of our citizens to translate into human terms the laws or political platforms they support. Political slogans tend to take on an emotional coerciveness regardless of their actual practical significance or human implications. Whole nations have been, and indeed are today, so dominated by such dogma in their political and social life that they follow its dictates, no matter how disastrous the consequences to themselves or others. A democratic society, whose institutions and political and economic procedures are constantly being developed or remolded, needs citizens who will possess the social sensitivity and imagination to see what political doctrines mean for human beings.

It has been said that if our imaginations functioned

1937

actively, nowhere in the world would there be a child who was starving. We should vicariously participate in his suffering—with the result that we should probably do something practical to alleviate it. The reading of the morning newspaper, with its account, let us say, of the slaughter of thousands of Spaniards or Chinese, the oppression of minorities in Germany and elsewhere, the destitution of millions of Americans on relief, even the injury and death of scores of people here and there in automobile accidents—and, unfortunately, a newspaper may very likely contain such an array of items—may take place without even an emotional quiver on the reader's part. He reads only with the surface of his mind, registers only the outline meanings of the phrases presented, and may never even glimpse what they mean in actual human experience. This habit of mind has its immediate value, of course. It is a form of self-protection; we should be reduced to a quivering mass of raw nerves and should suffer acute emotional exhaustion if every one of the phrases in our morning newspaper carried its message inevitably into the marrow of sensation and emotion. Yet this callous shell is there to be dealt with as a factor in the attempt to inculcate new understanding of human life and new attitudes toward it. Because of the reluctance of the average mind to make this type of translation into human terms for itself, the teacher must at times feel the responsibility for stimulating that process.

Many young people today seem to have withdrawn into some such defensive attitude of callousness. Not to

feel anything very deeply, not to care about anything too much, is one way of dulling the effect of quite possible defeat or disillusionment. In the sharp competition of the daily struggle for existence, it seems necessary, also, not to think too much about the feelings and needs of others. The way the youth in fascist countries has lent itself to a philosophy of force and brutal sadism is ample proof of the great social dangers inherent in that kind of disillusioned cynicism and flight from altruistic feeling.

Lack of such imaginative sympathy is probably back of many of our present-day muddles. No matter whether the problem is one of just distribution of taxation or the ending of child labor or the legal status and powers of the Supreme Court, the basis of any ultimate decision should be its meaning for actual human lives. This requires not only that we be able to understand the possible effect of our point of view upon ourselves and upon the human beings with whom we feel the kinship of family, class, or race—it is easy enough to feel these “human implications” with great intensity. We must also develop the capacity to feel intensely the needs and sufferings and aspirations of people whose personal interests are distinct from our own, people with whom we may have no bond other than our common humanity.

If there has been any “progress” during the past few centuries, it has been fundamentally the result of a certain extension of this kind of imagination. For is not “humanitarianism” ultimately the result of this sense of

the prime importance of the human being, based on the ability to transcend selfish interests and to feel the needs of others? Despite our wretched militaristic record, there has been an extension of increasingly humane social practices.

It would be absurd to suggest that literature was the cause of this (*Oliver Twist* and *Uncle Tom's Cabin* notwithstanding!) for the writing of such works was in itself the result of social conditions conducive to increased humanitarianism. Yet it can be maintained that literature undoubtedly contributes to the diffusion of more humane sentiment. And we are thinking here not only of works like *Oliver Twist* that preach such sensitivity but also of those works written without propagandistic social or moral aims. The ability to enter vicariously into the experience of others can be fostered by a great many different kinds of literary works. Since, as we suggested earlier, much in our individualistic society tends to make people callous to the needs of others, we should exploit this capacity of literature to nourish the imaginative flexibility that is essential to really social beings.

Constant reading of a wide range of literature will in itself, without any interference or contribution from the teacher, tend to develop this social sensitivity. The teacher, however, either can help the student to retain his living sense of the experiences through which he has just passed or, by pedantic or routine treatment of the work as "literature study," can lead him to dismiss them as something important only while he holds the book in his hand. By helping to focus the student's attention

upon the actual emotions through which he has vicariously entered into the lives of others, the teacher can reënforce the power of literature to develop social imagination. Hence, in attempting to "foster a vital personal relationship between the student and the literary work," the teacher will also be making an important social contribution.

BOOKS MAY HAVE ANOTHER INFLUENCE which is none the less important because it is so pervasive and so difficult to measure. Literature can play an important part in the process through which the individual becomes assimilated into the cultural pattern. Just as the young child and the adolescent acquire images of behavior and ways of thinking and feeling from the actions and lives of the people about them, so they may assimilate such images from the vicarious experience offered by books—from sharing the emotions and ideas of the poet, from participating in the lives of the people created by the novelist, the dramatist, or the biographer. We referred to this capacity of literature earlier (p. 106) when we spoke of the fact that the child and the adolescent often learn from books the "proper" (that is, culturally approved) emotional response to particular situations or types of people. Similarly, they will absorb from their reading ideas concerning the kinds of behavior or types of achievement to be valued, and they will acquire the moral standards to be followed under various circumstances.

Undoubtedly, the human influences, as they are en-

countered in the family, the school, and the community, tend on the whole to exert the most powerful and the most lasting influence. In recent years, however, it has been increasingly recognized that the newspaper, the radio, the moving picture, and the literary work often take their place beside other social agencies in the important task of molding the individual. Probably not enough attention has been given to the fact that literature is one of the important media through which our cultural pattern is transmitted.

Any individual born into a society must somehow, we have seen, learn not only its language, its gestures, its mechanics, but also the various superstructures of ideas, emotions, modes of behavior, moral values, that that particular society has built up around the basic human relationships. It has been maintained, for instance, that if it were not for literature most people would never even have suspected the possibility of romantic love. We in America are so much accustomed to the romantic interpretation of the relations between the sexes that such a remark may seem quite shocking. On reflection, we must admit that the whole superstructure of affection, admiration, idealization of the loved one, desire to sacrifice one's self for his or her welfare, and all the other attributes of the romantic relationship, does not inevitably and automatically grow out of the basic fact of sexual attraction. These are ways of feeling and behaving that we have learned to associate with this basic physical factor. After all, even within our western culture there are groups who dispense with much of this

idealizing aura cast about the sex relationship. They see it rather associated with the need for a mate who can propagate healthy children, or coöperate in the business of life on a farm, or bring the necessary wealth or social prestige. In any case, the feelings and attitudes associated with the basic fact of sexual attraction will have been, largely unconsciously, learned.

Even in the case of romantic love, one would exaggerate greatly if one supposed literature the sole agency through which it was taught. First of all, it would never have found expression in literature if there had not been present in the society the social and economic conditions out of which such a complex of attitudes could have flowered. And there are many other agencies through which this view of love can be inculcated. Yet undoubtedly literature has played a large part in its perpetuation.

This theory does, at any rate, emphasize one of the important social effects of literature—its inculcation of images of behavior and accompanying emotional attitudes. This applies potentially to all the phases of man's life and aspirations that have found expression in literature. With the increase of literacy and the wider dissemination of books, it can be expected that literature may play an increasingly important rôle in helping the individual to assimilate the superstructure of attitudes and expectancies which he must erect on the basis of his fundamental human impulses.

We are not thinking here of abstractly phrased statements concerning people or abstract formulations of

moral codes that may be encountered in books. The peculiar power of literature resides in the fact that it can exert an influence upon an emotional level, similar to the kind of influence exerted by people and situations in life. Hence the possible effect of books must not be thought of so much in terms of the general explicit ideas which the author presents. Much more important are the kinds of personalities and kinds of emotional overtones ascribed to particular situations or conduct.

The very things that are most taken for granted when we discuss the significance of a particular work may be the things that have the most powerful influence on the adolescent reader. We have already spoken of the adolescent's curiosity concerning what goes on behind the façade of adult life and what it means in intimate personal terms to fulfil various adult rôles. In literature, for instance, the adolescent finds certain traits of temperament, certain kinds of emotions, certain ways of achieving prestige, associated with women characters that are very different from the traits or satisfactions associated with the concept of the male character. Again, certain kinds of physical expressions of emotions such as fear, anger, or love are encountered, or certain emotional reactions are presented as appropriate to specific situations. Because of the personal quality of literary experience, it can be an important force in the transmission of the culturally accepted images of behavior.

Because we are speaking here of the power of literature to transmit those elements of our culture that we take most for granted, it may be easier to see its opera-

tion in a past age. The image of the delicate Pamela with her tiny waist and her hands too tender to scour a pewter dish had many even more exaggerated counterparts in eighteenth-century literature. Innumerable maidens of fragile physique, too ladylike to engage in even the slightest practical activity, sighed and wept and fainted their way through the pages of interminable eighteenth-century novels.² From letters and biographies of women of the time and particularly from the struggles of those women who came to revolt against this image, we can gather something of how inextricably these attributes came to be associated with the idea of being a lady.

Veblen, in his *Theory of the Leisure Class*, reminds us of some of the social and economic factors that probably produced this ideal of the lady; the novelist did not create her out of whole cloth, for obviously he was reflecting standards already crystallized. We can assume, however, that the novelists did much to perpetuate and to disseminate this image. Certainly, it has tended to persist in only a slightly modified form long after the conditions that produced it had changed. It began as a picture of the aristocratic or upper middle-class woman, but with changing social conditions and with the extension of literacy, we find the women of the lower classes seeking to approximate in their own appearance and behavior to this picture. This was not necessarily the aim of the novelists who created such heroines. Yet the

² See R. P. Utter and G. B. Needham, *Pamela's Daughters* (New York, The Macmillan Co., 1936). See also Wanda Fraiken Neff, *Victorian Working Women* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1929).

influence of this image of womanhood upon the imaginations of women was none the less great because it was incidental.

In the same way, manners of speech, gestures, social etiquette, as well as images of more complex behavior, such as the process of courtship, or the broader moral and social values, can be assimilated from books. Goethe's *Werther* or Byron's poems influenced whole generations. The part that Scott's novels have undoubtedly played in the hold of feudalistic ideas on the South offers another illustration. We are usually not sufficiently aware of the extent of this kind of influence. It may affect, for instance, attitudes toward different social classes: it may lead to the acceptance of rigid class differences, or it may suggest the possibility of overcoming them. Books may help fix attitudes toward different races; consider the influence, for instance, of the fact that the child usually encounters the Negro presented as an object for laughter or at best as a kind of prize domestic animal, as in so many of the novels of the South purporting to show the kindness of masters to servants. The repeated impact of such images bodied forth in poems, novels, plays, and biographies surely adds something to the complex pressures acting on the individual and leading him to crystallize his sense of the world about him and his sense of the appropriate attitudes to assume toward it.

THUS FAR, WE HAVE BEEN STRESSING the parallels between the nature of the influence of literature and the nature

of the influence of the family or the community environment. Literature, however, possesses certain special characteristics of its own. If one might imagine that all writings were eliminated from our society, the situation would be that found in so-called primitive societies today. In these societies only those elements of the culture present in the minds of specific human beings at that time can possibly be transmitted to the child born into the culture. The only chance for the child to suspect that any other way of life exists is through particular individuals in the society who may have had contact with other cultural groups. But the basic factor that distinguishes our own society from primitive societies is precisely that we do possess a written literature. Books are a means of getting outside the particular limited cultural group into which the individual is born. They are, in a sense, elements of the past or of widely varied present-day societies or aspects of civilization made personally available to the individual reader.

Books are one important means of transmitting a much more complex cultural pattern than could be derived from any particular family or community environment. Or we might phrase this differently and say that without the additional contribution offered by the written or printed word, it would be impossible for the personal or community agencies of cultural transmission to give to youth an adequate sense of the complex fabric of our society. Hence it is that the illiterate or unread person usually participates only in a very narrow and limited sub-culture in our society.

2) Literature offers a release from the provincialism of time and space. In this way it may exert a powerful influence upon the young person's future behavior. Given the fact that he lives in a heterogeneous, democratic society that is more and more explicitly seeking to create new social and economic patterns, literature can perform an increasingly important function. Any new synthesis, any integrated American culture, must be more than a mere aggregate of its many, often conflicting, social and economic groups. More than ever before it is essential that the individual be liberated from the provincialism of his own particular family, community, or even national, background. Democracy requires a body of citizens capable of making their own personal and social choices. The corollary of this is that they should be emotionally and intellectually aware of the possible alternatives from which to choose.

3 Our third generalization concerning the potential influence of literature is, then, that literature offers an important source of enlightenment concerning these possible alternatives. This constitutes the social value of that "enlargement of experience" which the college girls quoted in Chapter 2 attributed to literature.

Books can be a liberating influence in many ways. They may reveal to the boy and girl that there can be modes of life different from the ones into which they have happened to be born. They can learn about the extraordinary diversity of sub-cultures to be found within the framework of our society, with its wide sectional, economic, and social differences. Their reading can early

make them aware of the fact that there are families organized very differently from their own. They will discover that often in our complex society there are culturally accepted patterns of behavior and socially approved formulations of personal and social goals completely alien to those fostered by their own background.

Particularly important for the child is this discovery that various groups within our society hold up diverse images of success in life, and that there are kinds of work despised or ignored by his own group that other groups consider socially valuable. This diversity of patterns is undoubtedly one of the elements in our American society that we should seek to perpetuate. The craftsmen, the artists, the scientists, the intellectuals, the humanitarians, offer personal goals and systems of value often strongly in contrast to the pattern represented by the dominant image of the successful business man. Often it is through literature that the young boy and girl receive the first emotionally vivid realization of these facts. They glimpse types of temperament, kinds of work, intellectual and moral atmospheres, very different from anything they have known. They come to realize that there are wide possibilities for choice open to them within the framework of our American society.

The vicarious participation in different ways of life may have an even more broadly social liberating influence. The image of past civilizations or of past periods within our own western civilization, as well as images of life in other countries today, can help the youth to realize that our American society is only one of a great variety

of possible social structures. When this insight has been attained, the individual is able to look at the society about him more rationally. He is better able to evaluate it, to judge what elements should be perpetuated and what elements should be modified or rejected.

Literature not only makes possible the experience of diverse patterns of the past and present; it also offers the opportunity to envisage new and more desirable patterns. Wilde's dictum that "nature imitates art" is after all only a paradoxical expression of the fact that the artist often makes his fellow-man aware of new aspects of life, new modes of perception, new angles from which to view himself and the world. Perhaps Wilde was quite accurate in calling a sunset a poor Turner painting. Without Turner his contemporaries might never have learned to look for and perceive certain effects of light and color in that sunset. Surely the same thing applies equally well to what the artist and particularly the writer can reveal to us about new emotional overtones in relations between human beings, new aspirations toward greater fulfilment of human personality, or new points of view, moral and esthetic, from which to judge experience.

Thus the writer often becomes the medium through which the future is forecast. Or, to use the phrasing already employed, the artist, often especially sensitive to the new tendencies at work in the society about him, disseminates images of new goals. These may kindle in his readers' minds emotional drives that lead to the setting up of new patterns of conduct and new social structures. As the history of literature reminds us, again and

again writers have set forth such scathing revelations of the life about them or have created such attractive images of ways of life different from those accepted by their time, that they have helped to introduce new standards, new modes of sensibility, new possibilities of behavior, and new social ideals. Of course, their writings have had this influence because many other factors in the society at that time were conducive to it. Conversely, writers have many times created images of life that their own age and succeeding ones were not yet ready to understand or to assimilate.

THIS LATTER CONSIDERATION should allay the typical conservative fear that literary works may incite the young boy or girl to rush into all sorts of new and untried modes of behavior. This is a decidedly unrealistic view. It is based on the exaggerated idea of the social effects of literature that is usually associated with Victorian moralism. The Victorian critic often seemed to believe that the mere reading about particular actions in a book would in itself lead to the performance of the same actions in life.

Fortunately or unfortunately, the human being is not plastic enough to be easily moved to any new action simply by reading representations of it. The Victorians mistakenly thought of the reader as a blank photographic plate upon which was projected the series of images offered by a literary work. We have already discussed some of the factors that make the individual reader anything but such a blank photographic plate. All sorts of

influences in his environment have already left their imprint on him. As for the youth, literature can be only one of the many elements that help to channel that intensely dramatic process which is so casually called "growing up." Books contribute merely an additional influence that must take its place beside the others.

In the interplay of forces acting upon the individual, the literary work will probably have very little weight if its emphasis is directly opposed to the images which many of the agencies in the society about him may be reiterating. Thus if the work does not fit in with the dominant conceptions derived from the society about him, the reader may indignantly reject what the book offers. In fact, we have recognized that the great body of literature probably exerts its most powerful influence in reënforcing and perpetuating culturally accepted images, the ideas and attitudes taken most for granted. (We shall later return to the possibility that many of the assumptions concerning human nature that express obsolescent social conditions are being kept alive in the minds and personalities of our young people through the medium of literature.) Therefore we cannot think only of the work itself, but must deal with the possible interplay between the images or ideas presented by literature and the images or ideas derived from other environmental influences.

It is true that the reading of a book has sometimes changed a person's entire life. When that occurs, the book has undoubtedly come as a culminating experience that crystallizes a long, subconscious development. In

such cases the book usually opens out a new view of life or a new sense of the potentialities of human nature which resolves some profound need or struggle. These new images suggest a release from frustrations which the individual has been suffering or give sanction to needs and impulses which he had rejected. We certainly do not wish to minimize the importance of such possible effects of literature. The probability of any particular work having so profound and transfiguring an effect cannot, however, be predicted or planned for. It is the result of the convergence of a great many intangible factors. The possibility that literature may offer such inspiration should, nevertheless, make us eager to stimulate our students to roam freely through a great many types of literary experience.

The power of literature to build up emotional attitudes and to contribute to the formation of social goals and philosophies usually operates in more indirect and devious ways. The "influence of literature" will usually be the result of the cumulative effect of a long series of literary experiences, interacting with, or parallel to, the many other forces acting upon the young person.

Only in very rare cases would the literary image of a new and aberrant interpretation of a personal rôle outweigh the influence of frequently encountered conventional images of that rôle. *In those cases where the power of the old patterns sanctioned by the surrounding society is surmounted, it is usually because conditions have so changed that there is a crying need for a new adjustment.* Moreover, even then the new image probably must be

reënforced by constant repetition over a long period of time. The emancipated woman, for instance, appears in literature at least from the time of Shelley and Mary Wollstonecraft, very infrequently at first and only with any significant frequency after about 1880. Yet it was not until early in the twentieth century that that image caught the imaginations, and was translated into the practical lives, of an appreciable number of women.

This may seem to offer a decidedly pessimistic interpretation of the possible liberal influence of literature. That is not the case. We merely mean to stress the fact that no oversimplified theories concerning its influence can be accepted. Above all, it should be clear that the possible effect of any one literary work cannot be estimated without taking into consideration that it is only one strand in a complex fabric of influences working upon the individual. The social situation out of which the reader turns to a particular book will, in large part, determine its possible influence upon him.

The fact which counterbalances the rather negative implications of the preceding paragraph is the one to which we have returned so often: we are living in an age of extraordinary social flux. Because there is such a lack of unanimity in our society, because even the agencies committed to transmitting the conventional images are often self-contradictory or at cross purposes, the individual is left somewhat freer to assimilate—to accept or to reject—the images offered by literature. We can therefore still agree with the adolescents who claimed that the “enlargement of experience” is an important contribu-

tion of literature. Because conditions are ripe for it, people today are particularly eager for the new insights and new sensitivities that books may stimulate.

THE PARTICIPATION THROUGH BOOKS in a great variety of situations and the insight into contrasting social values will, it is true, reduce the possibility of the uncritical acceptance of any one book. This, from a social point of view, has its benefits, since the student will be better able to make rational choices between the different images and goals he vicariously experiences through literature. If he enjoys a widely varied literary fare, there is greater likelihood that he will function as a free, rational agent not only in his response to literature but also in his social and political relations.

Some one has said, "The fool learns only through experience. The wise man anticipates experience." This suggests the implications that connect the two threads of our discussion, concerning (1) the capacity of literature to offer vicarious experience through the imagination, and (2) its ability to present to us a great diversity of images of personality and conduct. Is not the capacity for imagination which we have been discussing—the ability to imagine oneself in a variety of situations and to envisage various possible alternative modes of behavior and their consequences—the thing which gives the "wise man" his advantage? C. S. Peirce, in stressing the value of what he called "ideal experimentation," was referring to the same thing. In imagination we rehearse various possibilities of action in a given situation. We

go through a process of imaginative trial and error, trying out various possible modes of behavior and working out their probable effects. When the situation arises in actual life, we are better prepared to act successfully.

In a sense, our reading of literature permits us something resembling this kind of "ideal experimentation," because it does offer us such a wide range of possible vicarious experiences. Through books, we can live different kinds of lives; we can anticipate future periods in our own life; we can participate in different social settings; we can try out a great variety of solutions to personal problems. We find some of these more satisfactory than others to us temperamentally; we are able to apprehend the practical and emotional results, the possible reactions of others, the social praise or blame, that will flow from such conduct. Literature may thus offer us a means of carrying on economically some of the trial-and-error elimination of patterns of behavior that might be disastrously expensive if carried on in real life. Hence the emphasis in earlier chapters on the necessity for providing the student with means for evaluating these various images of life that he encounters in books.³

THE VICARIOUS EXPERIENCES OFFERED BY LITERATURE can have a particularly significant effect when they are related to problems and conflicts with which the reader is intimately involved. The students mentioned in Chapter 2 remarked that often in books one comes across people

³ See also page 311 for remarks on the fact that literature does not mirror life.

like oneself or people who are having to work out problems similar to one's own: Other adolescents carry on the struggle to achieve some new working relationship with their families; other husbands and wives live through irritations and misunderstandings; other men and women seek recognition and the opportunity to exercise their talents in an indifferent world. The very fact that his situation is not unique, that it at least parallels what others evidently understand and have lived through, at once gives the reader some perspective. Through looking at his problems more objectively, he is helped to think and feel more clearly about them and is thus enabled to function better in real life. Thus literary experiences may help the reader to gain some objectivity toward his own personality and problems; this constitutes the fourth phase of the influence of literature which must be recognized.

Lawrence K. Frank has suggested ⁴ that ideally a course of literary experience could perform something approaching a psychoanalysis, if the reader were encouraged to react fully and freely. In large part, the psychiatrist serves his patient by helping him to bring into consciousness various experiences, attitudes, or impulses which, because of some feeling of guilt about them, he has submerged or "censored." The patient is then encouraged to look upon the submerged attitudes as scientifically explicable and hence manageable. Thus he is led to free himself from his fears and obsessions. In order that he may readjust his environment as well as himself,

⁴ In a letter to the writer.

he is also helped to see at what points his environment imposes unnecessary frustrations upon him. The experience of literature may have a similar liberating effect. By vicariously experiencing the life of a character in fiction, or through participating in another's emotion expressed in a poem, the reader may be enabled to bring into consciousness similar elements in his own nature and in his own past emotional life. This may provide the basis for a release from unconscious fears and obsessions of guilt.

Literary experiences may at least help to prevent the growth of neurotic tendencies. The adolescent particularly, it has been said, senses within himself various impulses and intense emotional reactions to people which he must learn to interpret. He becomes acutely self-conscious concerning his own motivations. As a child he has built up a particular sense of himself in relation to other people. Now he finds that "self" undergoing various modifications and expansions. Often he feels that he must be abnormal because of these unsuspected tendencies within him. Often, too, he develops a sense of guilt, a feeling that he is a highly sinful creature because his fantasies lead him into forbidden fields or because he resents the restrictions upon his behavior dictated by the people about him. If he has been brought up within a particular religion, the growth of agnosticism may lead to intense inner turmoil and disillusionment. Often the young boy and girl hesitate to confide any of these conflicts or fears to the adults about them because of the sense that these things represent sins against the ideas and

standards upheld by adults. Sometimes these fears and anxieties create nervous tension and neurotic distortions of the personality.

Such tensions and insights can sometimes be reduced or eliminated through the vicarious participation in other lives and in different ways of life which we have said literature makes possible. Books may help the adolescent particularly to perceive the validity of his own temperamental bent, even when that may not be valued by his own environment. Thus, through books the young boy and girl may find encouragement to set up goals for themselves that their own families might not even recognize as conceivable. A dreamy, sensitive, artistic boy in a family of extrovert business men, for example, or a practical, mechanically minded boy in a family with intellectual traditions might be particularly in need of such reassurance from literature. Boys in this situation might very easily develop the feeling that they were queer or failures because they did not fit in with the ideals of success imposed by their respective families. This sense of aloneness or of queerness creates much adolescent insecurity. Here we glimpse the power of literature to help solve personal frustrations. Perhaps only through books might each of these boys learn that other groups valued his kind of temperament and ability. For the first boy, works such as Willa Cather's or Thomas Mann's stories, for the second boy, works such as Michael Pupin's autobiography, might offer the sense of sharing common values and striving for approved goals that most individuals crave.

In the literature both of the past and of the present strong contrasts may be found to our contemporary American norm of the extrovert, "go-getting," shrewd business man. The range of human temperaments that have been admired and held up as a standard may probably best be revealed through the means of literature: The autobiography of a Franklin with its disciplined prudential hero may be contrasted with the reckless swashbuckling heroes of romance or with the sensitive, introspective characters in a Henry James novel. The passionate impulsive folk of Elizabethan drama may be compared with the intellectualized cynical creatures of Restoration plays, their most vigorous act some sharp thrust of phrase, or with the characters in contemporary dramas such as Shaw's or O'Neill's, where the dramatic conflicts usually take place within the mind and are revealed through a device of the author's. Images of the successful man of power may be placed beside portraits of characters whose success lay in self abnegation or in spiritual and intellectual achievement. The poets, too, offer a wide gamut of temperaments that we can come to know intimately.

The young girl particularly may need to be liberated from the narrow image of the feminine rôle imposed by her milieu. It hardly seems necessary to point out that through literature an extraordinarily broad range of feminine temperaments and a great variety of views of woman's place in society may be encountered: Pamela's determination not to offend the social code, the common-sense conformity of an Elizabeth Bennet, the passionate

struggles of a Diana Merion, the strivings for independence of contemporary heroines such as Ann Veronica and Ann Vickers, or the merging of their feminist aspirations with the broader struggle for human rights that characterizes many of the lesser-known heroines of recent proletarian fiction. The adolescent worry over the need to conform to the culturally dominant pictures of the temperamental traits, types of work, and modes of behavior appropriate to each of the sexes can be lessened through such a wide circle of literary acquaintances.

For the younger adolescent, we have seen, the concern with normality extends even to the problem of conformity to a particular physical type. Here, again, literature may show what a great diversity of physical traits has been admired. We see also, through fiction as well as through history, that physical characteristics, even those considered handicaps, need not prevent successful and happy lives. If one approaches fiction from this rather peculiar angle, one is amazed to find how many novels and stories do reflect this human concern with conformity to physical standards. Cyrano de Bergerac and Falstaff by no means stand alone. Even in our own day, for instance, we find Thomas Wolfe writing about the experiences of an extremely tall man, or Vardis Fisher, in *April*, telling the story of a girl who thinks herself hopelessly unattractive.

When the adolescent becomes aware of the fact that his present experiences and anxieties are not unique and that others have had the same impulses and conflicts, he may be better able to handle them. Frequently literature

is the only means by which he can discover that his own inner life reflects a common experience of others in his society. In this way a particular poem or an autobiographical novel may provide liberation from blind fears or guilt. Having discovered that others have lived through and dominated these supposedly strange or abnormal impulses, the adolescent can achieve sufficient objectivity to proceed to work out some integrated sense of his own emotional nature. He will often find that the impulses and reactions he feared are entirely "normal," that they are shared by many others in our society, and that there may be merely a convention (or a conspiracy) of silence about them. This potential influence of literature is especially difficult to measure. All that psychologists and psychiatrists have been telling us recently about adolescent conflicts, however, tends to suggest that this phase of its operation may be very important.

We must recall here a point introduced earlier in another connection (see page 50). We saw that often the reader, without necessarily being aware of it, interprets in terms of his own present emotional preoccupations and in terms of the life about him fictional situations and personalities that seem on the surface very remote. The reader responds not so much to the actual situation itself as to the structure of emotional relationships it implies. Thus we saw that a boy's zestful reading of *Mutiny on the Bounty* might be due to the fact that the pattern of rebellion against authority struck a responsive chord because he was passing through the process of psychological weaning from the authority of his parents. Or the rela-

tion between Othello and Iago may have significance because of the boy's own preoccupation with the need for loyal friends. Similarly, the biography of a great statesman may symbolize for the reader his own struggle to make others sympathize with his aims and enthusiasms.

This basic emotional parallelism is most obvious when an author selects some legend such as the Prometheus myth, or some story set in the past such as the Tristan and Iseult story, into which he infuses values, and emotional overtones significant to him in terms of contemporary life. Similarly, each age finds new significance in works like *Hamlet* or *Faust*. It is not usually recognized that the reader, in responding to a work of literature, *even one which deals with contemporary people and situations*, may also be transposing into his own special situation the emotional patterns that the work presents.

We should not be blinded to this by the fact that the reader will talk about these matters in the terminology furnished by the book. That merely makes it easier for him to bring his own inner problems into the open, and to face them or to get the help of others in solving them without the embarrassment of explicit self-revelation. Thus he often reveals what he cannot or will not say about himself. The teacher cannot afford to ignore this tendency to respond to the basic emotional pattern offered by poems or novels or plays. Even books that seem to have little to do with the actual practical externals of a student's life may still be the basis for vicarious experience and discussion that will lead to increased self-understanding for the student.

This is a perfectly valid way of responding to literature—we might even say in some ways the most valid, since it means that the work has profound importance for the reader. Our prime qualification has been that if, in projecting his own situation into the work, he has actually created something entirely alien to what the author could possibly have intended, the reader should be helped to become aware of this. We have seen that probably in many cases the task of the teacher will consist in such a clarification through the study of the various possible interpretations.

In recent years there has been much discussion of the value of literature as a means of "sublimation" of socially disapproved impulses. The desire for violence and cruelty; the need to dominate others; the need for sex expression when, as in the case of the adolescent, society prevents it; the wish to strike back at those who place restrictions upon us—these are tendencies for which literature is said to provide an outlet. In some ways this theory seems to restate the function of literature foreshadowed in Aristotle's much debated remarks concerning the catharsis or purgation of the emotions of fear and pity that results from the experience of tragedy.

Literature may perform an even more constructive service for the individual. It can suggest to him socially approved channels of expression for his impulses and emotions. The desire for aggression, for instance, the wish to subjugate others, which in a young boy's fantasies had taken a consistently anti-social form, might be directed through novels and biographies toward goals that

society would consider highly valuable. Domination of others might be sought not through physical violence, but rather through the possession of superior knowledge and even through the ability to help others, as for example through the knowledge of medicine. (Socially valuable behavior which had its source in this desire to dominate might not theoretically be as admirable as similar behavior growing out of a less selfish motive. Nevertheless, it is obvious that the aggressive impulses would have been given a much less dangerous form than if the boy continued to associate their satisfaction only with anti-social acts of violence.)

THE TEACHER SHOULD BE AWARE of these ways in which literary experience may help the student to see his own problems objectively, that is, in a wider context, and hence release him from fears and obsessions. In some rare cases the teacher might even consciously attempt to use literature in this way. One extremely sensitive teacher who has also had thorough training in psychology reports that she has been able to do this. She teaches in a school where it is possible for her to become intimate with the students. She has been able also to create an unself-conscious relationship with the students, which leads them to express themselves very freely in their writing for her classes. Thus the teacher is often able to glimpse some of the conflicts and obsessions with which the individual boy or girl may be struggling. In one case, for instance, it became apparent that the boy's sympathy for his mother and antagonism to his father was creating

strong feelings of guilt and creating much friction and resentment toward his father. The teacher casually suggested that the boy read such books as Bennett's *Clayhanger* and (admitting its meretricious elements) Deeging's *Sorrell and Son*. These books helped the boy to bring directly into consciousness the problem of his own relations to his father. He was freed from his own sense of guilt sufficiently to be able to discuss the matter and to work out some more adequate handling of it.

Unless the teacher is in an almost psychiatric relationship with the student, however, any attempt to use literature in this way would probably often create more conflicts and tensions than it solved. Many teachers would probably be led into officious meddling with the emotional life of their students. (Unfortunately, this is so because, like members of any other group in our society, many teachers are themselves laboring under emotional tensions and frustrations. Hence, their right to meddle in this way once admitted, there would be the temptation to find solutions for their own problems through the vicarious sharing of the student's life. There might also be the tendency to project upon the student their own particular preoccupations or obsessions, and to lead the student to think that he was suffering difficulties and frustrations which in reality were the teacher's and not his.) And assuredly, one thing worse than the old indifference to what is happening psychologically to the student is the tampering with personality carried on by well-intentioned but ill-informed adults. It is wisest for the teacher not to attempt to be a psychiatrist. The essential thing is

to be a complete human being in his relations with his students—bringing to bear upon his life with them all of the sensitivities that he would bring into play in his relations with people outside the school-room.

On the whole, the teacher should avoid any too literal application of what might loosely be called these psychiatric possibilities of literature. It is highly important, however, that the teacher should recognize the fact that books may often perform this function for young people. The teacher's responsibility is, therefore, to provide a wide selection of books and to help the student develop sufficient independence to seek out and select books for himself. Thus there may be at least the chance of his coming upon works that will be psychologically helpful. Moreover, if the teacher is aware of some of the conflicts and obsessions that recur most frequently among adolescents in our society, he will be able to provide books that have some relevance to these typical points of tension.

These considerations were an additional reason for the discussion of typical adolescent needs and conflicts offered in Chapter 5. Since any vital literary experience is possible only when the work strikes some responsive chord in the student's own personal preoccupations, the teacher must seek literary works that can have this personal import. The teacher will thus be fulfilling his obligation to develop the ability to appreciate literature and, at the same time, will be providing the kind of literary experiences that may have very valuable psychological repercussions through their liberation of the student from

inner tensions and fears. Probably in most cases the wisest thing for the teacher is to keep his attention focused on the relationship between the book and the student. If he does this part of his job well, in the spirit outlined in the earlier chapters of this book, he can probably feel assured that he has created the basis for a great deal more than purely "literary" insight.

THE CONSIDERATION OF PSYCHOLOGICAL VALUES that may be derived from literary works suggests a related problem that causes many teachers difficulty. They are aware that, both during school days and afterwards, the great mass of our American people feed on second-rate popular fiction, or on what the popular magazines indiscriminately offer. This type of reading matter is usually referred to as "escape literature." We have already suggested that the stilted academic approach to good literature in the schools may contribute to the student's feeling that he can get little personal enjoyment from it, so that he turns to a type of writing about which there hangs no academic aura. The reason more generally suggested for the reading habits of our American population is, however, that they reflect the desire for "escape." Undoubtedly, the causes for this wish to escape from reality are deeply rooted in the social and economic conditions of our society.

It is sometimes argued that the teacher's condemnation of cheap escape fiction is merely an expression of professional snobbery. If this "trash" gives pleasure and momentary release from the pressure of circumstances or

permits the compensation, at least in fantasy, for personal lacks and frustrations, why should the reader be denied this? Earlier, we suggested that one might differentiate between helpful and harmful kinds of escape from reality. Our criterion was that such an escape through literature should at least not leave the reader even less able than before to cope with reality.

The mental hygienist dealing with extremely maladjusted individuals would probably use various means, such as this type of literature, for even a temporary effect. In such cases, however, the literature performs the function merely of a narcotic, a drug that momentarily releases tension. The work of putting the patient on the road to mental health, of giving him greater capacity for meeting situations in life, by building up sound mental and emotional habits still has to be done. If there is no psychiatrist at hand to set up the necessary constructive tendencies, however, repeated indulgence in the drug of escape fiction, without any change in the circumstances that created a need for it, can lead only to an increased craving for such escape.

In most cases these writings present a falsified image of life. The obstacles placed in the way of the characters are oversimplified. The ease with which problems are solved, or the absence of any real problems, probably constitutes one appeal of this type of writing. Even more subtly enervating are the emotions undiluted with thought and lacking in individual quality in which the reader shares. Purportedly successful personal relationships in marriage or in business are usually presented

in naïvely simple terms. And the crudest elements in our society, the ruthless competition, the emphasis on wealth, the respect for the "winner" no matter what his methods, often provide the framework of the story.

The reader will return to life from this kind of easy satisfaction and success less capable than before of understanding and coping with the complex situations, the subtly blended combinations of pain and pleasure, the mixture of frustrations and satisfactions, that life offers. The reader emerges from his experience of this popular fiction with the notion that a lower level of vitality is required for a full life than is actually the case. He has an oversimplified picture of what goes to make up successful living, and he tends to accept uncritically many of the least admirable aspects of our society.

To be sure, it is not always trashy fiction that provides this kind of escape. The reader who immerses himself in medieval romance, or who reads and rereads the works of Scott as a steady literary diet, or who turns constantly to such works as Trollope's stories of quiet cathedral towns, or who reads only tales of adventure in exotic settings, may be indulging in the same kind of flight from reality as the salesgirl who avidly reads the stories about wealthy lords and ladies on the Riviera. In either case, there has undoubtedly been a period of pleasant escape from the difficulties, disappointments, and perplexities of the present-day world. Surely, only the most ascetic of Puritans would wish to cut us off completely from that kind of relaxation and enjoyment. The difficulty lies in the fact that the habit of such reading may tend to take

a greater and greater hold—and to lead the individual to turn with increasing eagerness to this life of fantasy.

Although we cannot deal directly with the fundamental social causes for this national craving for the drug of “escape” literature, we may at least in the literature class attempt to counteract the tendency to follow the path of least resistance. One way might be to take the bull by the horns and to discuss some examples of cheap fiction in the classroom. It is wise, after all, to start with the student at whatever level of understanding and appreciation we may find him. There is no point in merely condemning the reading that he most enjoys. He will then only develop a feeling of guilt about it without being able to resist the desire to indulge in it. The reading of forbidden books “in the attic” or “behind the barn” seems to be one of the most persistent traits of our culture. And it is about time that we realized that such condemnation or prohibition alone can have only pernicious effects.

For the adolescent student, the calm analysis of the reasons for the appeal of this kind of reading might lessen its attraction. A critical attitude toward the silly and dishonest pictures of life offered by such fiction can have a wholesome influence. The contrast between cheap and honest treatments of similar themes might help to accomplish this. Adolescents are capable of realizing that the falsely glamorous romances in which the heroes and heroines sail through to wealth and love set up very crude images of success. Love is limited to the purely physical relationship, and success is defined principally

in terms of material possessions. They can be made aware through other books of the many richly satisfying emotional and intellectual values that can be integrated into the love relationship. They can be helped to judge by other criteria of happiness the picture of wealth as equivalent to success.

Without assuming a "holier than thou" attitude, we should attempt to discover what elements in adolescent psychology lead our students to turn to this cheap fiction, and we should try to provide more wholesome and more invigorating satisfactions for these needs. Educators and parents have come to recognize the importance of this in the field of sex education. They realize that the attempt to prohibit any knowledge of sex resulted in the adolescent seeking this satisfaction for his curiosity and day-dreams from undesirable sources, often cheap fiction. They admit, therefore, that it is better to provide this information in more wholesome ways and to permit the adolescent to read literature that deals frankly and honestly with sex as a fundamental and enriching element in man's life. This principle should not be restricted merely to the field of sex knowledge, however. There is certainly something wrong with a literature curriculum, if the students turn from it to seek, for instance, the sense of adventure and vigorous action in pulp magazines. These same qualities are to be found in abundance in good literature. Probably in many cases, the school is still too much dominated by nineteenth-century ideas concerning the literature of the past that the cultivated person should read, when it would be very easy to find

equally good literature that has the swift pace and vigorous action that the student craves.⁵

THE CHOICE OF BOOKS to be read by the student will be affected by the preceding considerations. Our primary conclusion is that the teacher should seek to make available literary materials that will have relevance to the general emotional and intellectual level of his students and to the possible points of stress in their particular home and community background. Our second conclusion is that the teacher can probably do much toward preparing the boy and girl for adult life merely through the provision of a broad range of literary experiences.

The oversimplified Victorian notion concerning the influence of literature led to a rigid censorship of books by publishers and critics as well as by parents and teachers. Particular books were valued because they offered approved models of conduct which young people were expected to imitate. Our view of literature as only one of many conditioning influences has led to a rather different emphasis: in a democracy, the more varied the literary fare provided for students the greater its potentialities as an educationally liberating force. In this way, through literature, the necessarily limited influence of their environment will be supplemented and corrected by contact with expressions of other phases of society and other types of personality.

⁵ Even when such books are read in a classroom, there still remains the danger that they may be drained of all their tang and zest by routine study. Even *Treasure Island* or *Typee*, of which an expurgated school edition was published recently, have been known to become flat and unprofitable under such treatment.

This means that the student will not be limited merely to one kind of literary diet. He will not read exclusively the work of the past or present. He will not be nourished entirely on the literature of England and America. Instead, he will be permitted an insight into ways of life and social and moral codes very different even from the one that the school is committed to perpetuate.

These generalizations concerning the choice of books apply to several specific problems that can be mentioned only very briefly. Very often in school children are required to read works that demand a constant effort at comprehension because the vocabulary and sentence structure represent "the next stage" toward which they are being led. Or they may be required to read works written in an archaic language, very different from the language that they hear about them or that is used by accepted contemporary writers. Few adults—even college professors!—impose upon themselves the task of constantly reading works with a vocabulary that is strange to them or with a complicated style that demands unusual efforts of attention. Only rarely do they undertake such tasks. Most of the time their reading is at the level of their present vocabulary and powers of attention. In our zeal to give our students the proper literary training, we tend constantly to set them tasks a step beyond their powers, or to plunge them into reading that almost requires the learning of a new language. No wonder they turn to the "pulp"!

The question of command of language leads us to broach another controverted subject: the literature of

the past versus contemporary literature. When one objects to the withering of any possible love of the "classics" that results from intensive study of words and syntax, the answer is usually that otherwise the students will not understand what they are reading. If a work presents such linguistic difficulties, one may question whether a direct attack on the linguistic problems offers a solution. By the time the student has acquired enough understanding of the unusual language, the work as a whole has probably lost the power to affect him. If the work presents experiences and ideas highly relevant to the student's own preoccupations, his interest will probably carry him over the hurdle of the language difficulty and give him sufficient motivation to study the language. Many of the great classics have an element of vivid action, strong emotion, and suspense that may provide an incentive for the more mature or the more intelligent student to clear away the obscurities due to unfamiliar language or literary forms. Too often, however, the classics are introduced to children at an age when it is impossible for them to feel in any personal way the problems or conflicts treated.

Difficulties in understanding, as we pointed out in Chapter 5, are usually not a matter merely of words and syntax, for words must be apprehended in some context of experience. The teacher who feels that if he only can get the students to understand the individual words, he will have eliminated all obstacles, is often mistaking the symptom, the language difficulty, for the real seat of the trouble, the student's lack of readiness for what the

work offers.⁶ For the great majority it probably would be much wiser to postpone such reading and to build up linguistic flexibility gradually through the use of more familiar materials. When the students are more mature, more experienced, they will then be able to apprehend enough of what the great classics offer to be willing and eager to clarify any linguistic obscurities.

When one thinks of all that the great works of the past can yield, one is horrified to see them reduced to the level so often of language exercise books for the young. The antipathy of many students to the works of Latin and Greek authors arose from this use of masterpieces beyond their powers of appreciation as texts for acquiring the language. Those who cram the classics down students' throats long before they are ready are careless of the fate of the great works of the past.

Even though the great majority of our young people were to graduate from school and high school without having encountered many of the great authors or works of the past, we should not need to be alarmed if they had built up the ability to read with understanding and had acquired zest for the kind of experience that literature

⁶ Obviously, this does not imply a neglect of any of the means by which we can help the student to acquire a clearer understanding of words themselves. The dictionary can become a very interesting book for the student, if what he gets from it is not left on the purely verbal level. He should develop the habit of using it, just as the motorist uses a road map, as a tool to get him to the right place.

See pages 130-139 for other references to this problem of understanding. There has been increasing interest in this basic problem of meaning, owing to the wholesome influence of the work of logicians such as G. E. Moore, Bertrand Russell, P. Bridgman. The work of C. K. Ogden and I. A. Richards, *The Meaning of Meaning*, has been particularly influential.

can give. If we try to crowd into the school years everything "that ought to be read," we evidently assume that the young person will never read again, after school years are over. Our aim should be to develop people so much interested in what literature offers that they will read later for themselves. Thus, they will come to the classics at that point in their mental and emotional development when particular works will have particular significance for them. To force such works upon the young person prematurely is evidence of a lack of confidence that we are educating people who will have a personal love of literature sufficiently deep to lead them to seek it out for themselves at the appropriate time.

The difficulty presented by works of the past is, of course, that not only the language, but also the externals of life and the manners and morals represented in a book may seem so peculiar to a student that his attention is focused almost completely on these aspects rather than upon the major experiences that the authors sought to convey. Even those works that deal with personal emotional problems still vital today are often clothed in an atmosphere and deal with ways of life that make the whole thing seem artificial and remote. Many teachers are aware of this requirement that before the student can enjoy a work, he must feel that it has some relevance to his own experience. They therefore often devote much time and energy to helping the student see the equivalents in our own society of the different elements of life represented in the work. Actually, they tend to

carry on the process of revealing the basic emotional patterns treated in the work.

Still, there are many works of the past in which the images of strange manners and morals do not obscure a comprehension of the basic emotional relations. In such cases, the work of the past may offer just as intense a personal experience as would a more contemporary work. The story of the friendship of Achilles and Patroclus surely might seem as personally important to a boy as would a treatment of the friendship relation such as Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* (1937). The story of Lear and his daughters, despite its fairy-tale accoutrements, might seem as near to a girl as the relations between Papa La Fleur and his daughters in Zona Gale's novelette. *Dombey and Son*, just because it was written at a time when problems of parent-child and husband-wife relations still were drawn in their broadest terms, might be more comprehensible than the treatment of similar problems in a book by Virginia Woolf. The fact that sometimes writers of the present, like James Joyce or T. S. Eliot, are themselves so much the product of a long literary heritage makes them less comprehensible to the young reader than a nineteenth-century writer would be. The student himself needs to go through the experience of literature of the past before he can understand them.

Nevertheless, it is true that most contemporary authors offer no such difficulty, but write about a life that the student can understand. For instance, Benet's *John*

Brown's Body might be more easily understood than *The Lady of the Lake* or *The Idylls of the King*; Carl Sandburg might have more personal impact than Matthew Arnold, Galsworthy than George Eliot. The question of literary comparisons must wait until the students can handle the historical obstacles to participation in the older works.

There are certain other considerations that might be raised in connection with the use of classical or contemporary literature. It is usual to think that books survive through a winnowing-out process that assures their being a repository of the accumulated wisdom of the race. There is much in this view. Even so, it is hard to find any great work that has been consistently recognized as such. Shakespeare has had his ups and downs as have the lesser writers. And when different ages agree in their exaltation of a work, it may be for widely differing reasons. Moreover, in any work, the elements of "lasting truth" are intermingled with much that was special to the particular age in which it was written. This is as true of the work of a Shakespeare, a Milton, or a Goethe as it is of a Jane Austen.

Surely, many of the works that we usually speak of as "things that every person should have read" lend powerful reënforcement to emotional attitudes and assumptions concerning human nature that our contemporary life and our contemporary scientists have discarded as outmoded and false. We must at least feel the responsibility for estimating the possible influence of a steady diet of literature produced out of social systems

and ethical philosophies very different from our own. Ideas concerning the relations between men and women, employer and employee, between the citizen and the state, and indeed between man and the universe, as they are reflected in much of the older literature, would seem to exalt what the person of average enlightenment today considers a reactionary or limited view. To what extent is such literary training in the schools contributing to the persistent hold of images and ideals no longer appropriate to our present-day life and present-day knowledge? For what sort of inner personality conflicts are we preparing our adolescents if we give them the opportunity only for imaginative identification with images of behavior irrelevant to the actual life they must live? ⁷

Obviously, these questions are presented in oversimplified form. We need here to repeat the reminder that books do not operate in a vacuum and that their influence is always part of a complex network of social factors. The boy, for instance, who has come into contact with the present-day skeptical scientific attitude will naturally be less likely to absorb the authoritarian supernaturalistic point of view that permeates much of the writing of the past. Yet in a conflict between the two

⁷ To what extent, for example, can the influence of literature be held responsible for the fact that many women today find within themselves emotional obstacles to their sincere ambition to be independent emotionally and intellectually? Throughout their entire experience with literature, they have been led to identify themselves most often with the older image of woman as temperamentally, as well as economically, subordinate and dependent. See Chapter 8, p. 314 for further discussion of this problem.

attitudes, a steady fare of such literary experiences might tend to strengthen the image of subservience to intellectual authority. It is more realistic to think of particular literary works as tending to reënforce or to weaken attitudes and images which the young person may encounter through other social influences.

To propose to cut off the child from the literature of the past would be absurd. Surely, one of the requisites for a person who is fully equipped to function in the present is that he should have a knowledge of the past. Do not the preceding considerations suggest, however, that it is equally absurd to restrict our students entirely to works of the past, and that it is dangerous to cut off the young person from the literature of the present? The fact that a book is written by one of our contemporaries is certainly no automatic proof of its value. Still, in the mass of work produced today, there is much that represents those areas of thought and experience which are the points of growth and change in our own age. May we not be crippling the young person intellectually if we deprive him of an awareness of these contemporary tendencies? It is important for him to come into contact with these expressions of personal and social problems with which men of today are confronted. Books provide a sense of the nature of the adult world into which he must enter, and they help him to forge, through the process of "ideal experimentation," some of the necessary intellectual and emotional tools.

This brings us back to the principle so often reiterated in these pages, that the test of what books should be read

8

EMOTION AND REASON

IN THE preceding analysis of how the reader may gain self-understanding and emotional liberation through literature, the emphasis was primarily on the relationship between the individual student and the book. The teacher entered the picture only through his power to limit or broaden the range of books with which the student might come into contact. But the teacher's function does not end there. Since we hope that he will play the rôle sketched for him in our earlier chapters, we must evaluate that suggested teaching process from our present point of view: What is its potential influence on personality and behavior? This will involve us also in a consideration of how the study of literature may create an understanding of the various basic social concepts discussed in Chapter 6.

Briefly, the teaching process that we outlined consists in helping the student to develop the habit of reflecting upon his primary response to books. Having given him the essential opportunity to react freely, the teacher then seeks to create a situation in which the student becomes aware of possible alternative responses and is led further

to examine both his own reaction and the literary work itself. In this way he is helped to understand his own preoccupations and assumptions better and to see whether he has taken into account everything that the work offered. This process of reflection leads the student to seek additional information concerning the work, the author, and their social setting, as a basis for understanding of himself and of literature. These new personal and social insights may ultimately lead to a revision of his original judgment and may improve his equipment for future response to literature.

Now if we were to substitute the words *situation or personality in life* for *literary work* in the preceding paragraph, the description would apply equally well to the kind of thinking which is most fruitful whenever an individual meets a new situation in life or must work out a relationship with a new kind of personality. His first need is to understand his own emotional response to the person or situation. He needs to realize to what extent he is dominated by preoccupations and prejudices that may have led him to exaggerate some things, ignore others, and thus not to have fully understood them. He has to bring his basic moral or psychological assumptions out into the open in order to test the validity of their application to this new situation. He may find that his own past experience and information must be supplemented before he can make an adequate judgment or plan appropriate action. The result of these considerations may be a rejection or revision of his original reaction. Through this process of self-scrutiny, he may have come to under-

stand himself, as well as the outside world, better. A certain inner readjustment may have started which will modify his response to the next person or situation encountered.

In the case of either the literary experience or the actual life experience, a process such as the one outlined constitutes a process of reflective thinking. If the individual is stimulated often enough to engage in this kind of reflection, it may tend to become habitual. There will have been set up a readiness to reflect upon his own attitudes to people and situations as a prelude to passing judgment or deciding on action.

It seems legitimate to suggest, therefore, that in building up the habits of mind that are essential to the attainment of sound literary judgment the student will also be acquiring mental habits valuable for the development of sound insight into ordinary human experience and conducive to a rational handling of experiences in life itself.

There is more than a verbal parallel between the process of reflective thinking based on the response to literature and the process of reflection as a prelude to action in life itself. Professor John Dewey has reminded us that in actual life constructive thinking usually starts as a result of some conflict or discomfort, or when habitual behavior is impeded and a choice of new paths of behavior must be made. Such thinking, therefore, grows out of some sort of tension, some emotional impulse, and is colored by it. The tension contributes the impetus toward seeking some solution, but intelligent behavior

is the result of thought brought to bear upon the problem. Moreover, the validity of the thought will usually depend on the extent to which emotion has been controlled or has been prevented from obscuring the actual situation before us. "Impulse is needed to arouse thought, incite reflection and enliven belief. But only thought notes obstructions, invents tools, conceives aims, directs technique, and thus converts impulse into an art which lives in objects." ¹

Educators are more and more recognizing this view of constructive thinking. It is comparatively easy for the student to think rationally about difficult human problems at a time when only impersonal academic requirements make them abstract subjects of thought. Unfortunately, that kind of thinking is probably not very useful; it lacks the starting point of conflicting impulses or emotional perplexities out of which thinking usually grows in real life. For, as Professor Dewey says,²

The conclusion is not that the emotional, passionate phase of action can be or should be eliminated in behalf of a bloodless reason. More "passions," not fewer, is the answer. To check the influence of hate there must be sympathy, while to rationalize sympathy there are needed emotions of curiosity, caution, respect for the freedom of others—dispositions which evoke objects which balance those called up by sympathy, and prevent its degeneration into maudlin sentiment and meddling interference. Rationality, once more, is not a force to evoke against impulse and habit. It is the attainment of a working harmony among diverse desires.

¹ John Dewey, *Human Nature and Conduct* (New York, Henry Holt and Co., 1922), pp. 170-171.

² *Ibid.*, p. 195.

We teachers should recognize much more clearly than we do the possibilities in literary materials for furthering that kind of rationality. They may provide the basis of emotional tension and conflicting attitudes out of which may spring the kind of thinking that can later be assimilated into actual behavior. The emotional character of the student's response to literature offers an opportunity for helping him to develop the ability *to think rationally within the context of an emotionally colored situation*. Furthermore, the teaching situation that we have described, in which a group of students and a teacher exchange views and stimulate one another toward clearer understanding, can contribute greatly toward the development of such habits of reflection. The account of several specific classroom discussions may serve to illustrate this.

We have already mentioned the group of students who were discussing Ibsen's *A Doll's House* (see page 142). After they had clarified their historical approach to the play, they still found themselves involved in a lively difference of opinion. "Nora should never have left her children, no matter how unhappy she was," declared one of the girls. "Her main duty was toward them and toward maintaining a home for them." This was vigorously opposed by other students who claimed that Nora's duty was first of all toward herself. She needed to develop her own mind and personality so that she might consider herself truly an individual. Without this, they insisted, she could be of little service to her children.

The girls had obviously identified themselves very

strongly with Nora; the discussion seemed to have a definite personal immediacy for them. The rights of a woman to self-expression and personal dignity were thoroughly canvassed. Nevertheless, all of the students, even the most decided individualists, hesitated to say that Nora had no responsibilities toward her children. Indeed it would seem that for Nora herself complete fulfillment of her personality would have included a rich relationship with husband and children. A number of the girls in the group found it difficult to take one position or the other. Their sympathies were involved in Nora's gesture of independence; they shared her desire to stand completely alone; yet they were equally ready to see the value of marriage and children. The important thing is that at this point an "emotional tension" had been set up in the minds of various students in the group.

Although the discussion at this point seemed to be moving in circles, the teacher did not rush the students over this hurdle. Finally, some one pointed out that perhaps personal independence did not necessarily mean cutting one's self off from relationships with others. Certainly an individualism that entailed the sacrifice of important relationships could not be very desirable. A valuable kind of independence for Nora would have permitted her to be a complete human being, yet to remain in the home and to function as a wife and mother. The fact was recognized that it is often necessary to sacrifice certain satisfactions—such as the right to complete, untrammelled independence—in order to satisfy other needs in our nature. On the other hand, it was agreed that the

rôle of wife and mother should not have required a submergence of Nora's personality. One student pointed out furthermore that even if Torvald had been an ideal husband, there still would have remained the need for adjustment between the personalities of the husband and wife.

The students here were groping toward ideas that authorities on family problems and on mental hygiene consider extremely important. They remind us that in order to achieve an integrated personality the individual must reconcile or adjust conflicting impulses and aspirations within himself. Moreover, much friction would be avoided if greater recognition were given to the fact that any personal relationship necessarily entails compromises between different temperaments. The family group, for example, should provide freedom for the satisfactory development of each of the personalities within it; yet if it is to be a smoothly functioning group, each individual must be willing to adapt himself to a certain extent to the others. The adolescent, in his present family or in future relationships, will be better prepared to make the necessary adjustments, if he has thoroughly assimilated this approach.

In this discussion, there was not only a clash of opinion among various students; certain students discovered within themselves conflicting emotional attitudes. Thus these students lived through a remote and pale, yet emotional reflection of the inner conflict that must often attend choices in life.

Furthermore, in this phase of their discussion the girls

were not merely considering the different demands and responsibilities of the marriage relationship. That was valuable, of course. In addition to this, they achieved some understanding of the complex adjustments required in any relationship between individuals, each with his own needs and aspirations. They worked out in their own terms an insight into the way in which the individual must arrive at some reconciliation between his different needs or different impulses; he must attempt to satisfy those that he feels to be most important with as little sacrifice as possible of other valued tendencies in his nature. An awareness of these things was much more important than any conclusion that the students might have reached concerning the "rightness" of Nora's final act.

And more significant than any statements in themselves made by the students was the fact that these ordered ideas grew out of emotional tension and personal feeling. There is no proof that the insights these students achieved in this discussion were retained. But it can safely be said that these insights were more likely to be retained than if the same ideas had been encountered in an impersonal way in a traditional psychology or sociology course.

The fact that Ibsen's *A Doll's House* is a "problem play" may possibly obscure our point. The process that we have been discussing might have grown out of the experience of a play that was in no way designed to focus attention on any controversial problem. Indeed, our thesis is that the very works that are read merely because

of their "literary" significance may be productive of such illumination.

This may be illustrated by a discussion of Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* carried on by a group of freshmen in a woman's college. The play was rejected by the majority of the group. Their dislike for the tragedy, it became apparent, grew out of their antipathy to the character of Cleopatra. "I hate that kind of woman. She is selfish, conceited, grasping for power. I am not interested in what happens to her." Like most students, they had responded to the character as they would in real life. The teacher's job is to help the student to maintain that personal and living sense of the work and yet to react to it in rational terms.

In this case, the students were challenged to consider the basis for their antipathy. It finally became obvious that they saw Cleopatra from the point of view of the average woman to whose marital peace a person like Cleopatra would be a decided menace! (When this episode was related to an authority on adolescent psychology who is a principal in charge of guidance in a large California high school, her comment was that the students' reaction to Cleopatra was as much in terms of their present adolescent relationships as it was in terms of any future adult situations. We tend to forget, she pointed out, that adolescents in their boy and girl relationships are already engaged in an intense emotional life parallel to adult experiences. They are already, for instance, experiencing the disillusionments and triumphs of sex

rivalry. She remarked that this discussion of the play offered further proof of our thesis that it is the preoccupations and problems with which the student is struggling in his own life that often determine the nature of his response to literary experiences.)

The students felt that their judgment of Cleopatra's ruthlessness and egotism was justified. In the course of their discussion, however, they began to realize that after all the author had deliberately sought to create an ego-centric, wilful, and unscrupulous being. This led them to inquire what Shakespeare's motive might have been. Obviously, he wanted the reader to feel that the fate of Cleopatra and Antony was important. Much as we might disapprove of Cleopatra in real life, we come to perceive through the play that the desire for complete power over Antony, the reckless wish to be a consuming obsession for him, is coupled with a capacity for intense feeling. Her very vices and weaknesses, like those of Antony, are intermingled with traits that make their struggle and their downfall significant. Although morally some of Cleopatra's actions may merit condemnation, she possesses great vitality, the ability to feel and act on a grand scale. If we set aside our first moralistic judgment and approach the character in this way, we are able to live through the intense passions and the intermingled childish and queen-like actions that characterize her. Shakespeare, the students concluded, helps to make us understand what that kind of person is like. There is understanding to be gained from living through the fugue of emotions that

the play presents to their resolution in those noble last scenes.

From this discussion of Cleopatra, there emerged, first of all, a clearer understanding of the esthetic attitude. Cleopatra's significance for them was obviously not what it might have been if she were part of their own practical lives. They could afford to set aside their practical reaction toward her. In that way they could participate in the complex and heightened form of experience that the play offered. A student suggested that perhaps there is a value in availing ourselves of the opportunity offered by art to eliminate practical considerations and to seek merely to understand and enjoy the essential character of all sorts of people and experiences.

From this literary perception then flowed certain ideas that tended to modify the students' primary reactions. They came to see that their practical judgments on people, either in a play or real life, need not necessarily be the limit of their understanding of them. They might seek further to comprehend the human drives that lead people to act in ways potentially injurious or distasteful to them. In some cases, they realized, their own aims and satisfactions might from the point of view of other people seem equally alien or objectionable.

Implied in this discussion, therefore, was the germ of a new moral attitude. In contrast to the idea that one had the choice only of approving or condemning, accepting or rejecting, other people, it was implied that one might seek to understand them. In opposition to the notion that

there were fixed rules of conduct which could be applied unqualifiedly to all people under all circumstances, it was suggested that judgment should be passed only after the nature and motives of the behavior, as well as the particular circumstances, had been understood. We might condemn the act and yet wish to understand what produced it. Our moral judgment itself would thus become more humane.

Much less complex works than Shakespeare's plays may lead to similar insights. A class in a coeducational southern school was reading plays and short stories. The group was at first content to condemn the mother in Sidney Howard's *The Silver Cord* or to talk about how much they disliked the vain posturings of Mr. Reginald Peacock in Katherine Mansfield's story. Because of the way the reading for the course was arranged, they tended also to speak in terms of "types" of people such as the boor, the sadist, the gossip. One or two of the students, however, tried to suggest some excuse for these characters' behavior; the discussion ultimately veered toward the idea that after all the important thing was not to condemn or suppress such people but rather to find out what produced such personalities and such behavior. The students felt that through their reading they had first of all been led to observe themselves and other people much more carefully. That in itself, they felt, was useful because one might then learn "how to live with them." It might also be better not to think that one necessarily had the right to try to change other people, or that mature personalities are easily modified. At least, however, one might attempt

to see what explained their behavior in order that one might help to create conditions that would in the future produce more socially valuable people.

The class had started with a decidedly moralistic attitude, sitting in judgment upon the characters encountered in their reading. Their point of view changed appreciably in the direction of greater human sympathy and objectivity. Instead of thinking only of individual human beings, they saw them in relation to the social forces that had molded them or that gave them scope for expressing their special temperaments.

Another instance: Recently a man noted as a brilliant teacher of English sought to show to what absurd lengths a concern with the social influence of literature might be carried. Some people, he remarked, might demand that the *Merchant of Venice*, for instance, be barred from the schools. Could it not be argued that in a class in which a number of the students were Jewish, Shylock would create self-consciousness and resentment in that group and reënforce the prejudices of the rest of the class? His hypothetical argument (which he himself did not accept) assumes a number of things that our preceding discussion has rejected. The first assumption is that the children would read the play and react to the character of Shylock without any interchange among themselves or with the teacher. The second assumption is that even if they did express themselves, their original ideas would remain unchanged.

The educational situation which we have outlined in the preceding chapters negates both these assumptions.

If the literary experience offered by this play did give rise to decided reactions to Shylock, that should have served merely as the beginning of a process of clarification such as we described earlier. The children would not be encouraged merely to express their attitude toward Shylock. The discussion would become a means of leading them to understand Shylock's situation, to see the adverse conditions against which he struggled, and to recognize the connection between that and his behavior. In other words, the value of that particular part of the play would have been their living through the experiences of a member of a minority race and their attempt to understand his behavior even when it was distasteful or ridiculous to them.

It might be contended that Shakespeare undoubtedly shared the prejudices of his age and that therefore this excursion into the development of racial understanding would be irrelevant to the play. Even if one were to grant the contention concerning Shakespeare's attitude, the English teacher could still not justifiably ignore the fact that the students were reacting to the play in terms of their own present-day lives. He therefore could not shirk the opportunity offered to contribute to a more rational, unprejudiced approach to human beings. The young people in school function as whole personalities; they are not creatures that can be neatly divided into literary or sociological segments, each segment to be ministered unto by a different teacher. Hence the English teacher must feel some responsibility for dealing with whatever results or repercussions, no matter how controversial or

“non-literary,” the experience of such a play may have. The fact that the play is “great literature” may have determined its selection in the first place, but that means nothing unless it has human significance today.

SOME WILL CONCEDE that the school and the teacher have the responsibility of developing such insight into human relations or of building up more tolerant attitudes, but will still raise this question: Why suggest this roundabout way of transmitting such insight? Why not have given the first group of girls lectures on the need for adjustment of the different temperaments within the family? Why not have presented to the other groups a clearly worked-out theoretical exposition of the factors conditioning personality and behavior? Why take the time of a literature class for discussions suggested by the haphazard accidents of student reactions? Topics may not be brought into the discussion in any logical order, and there may be important subjects that the students may not introduce in their discussions at all. Would it not be preferable to eliminate any such topics from the literature classroom and to depend on a more orderly method of presenting this information to the students?

The considerations set forth in the first five chapters of this book offer an answer to one phase of these questions. The student's personal response to literary works will be primarily colored by his attitudes toward the human beings and situations they present. To attempt to ignore these student reactions would, we decided, destroy the very basis upon which any greater literary sensitivity

could be built. Even if we were to interpret the English teacher's responsibilities in the narrowest terms, we still should have to admit the importance for literature of the discussion of topics such as we have outlined.

If, on the other hand, one were not at all concerned with whether students developed sounder literary appreciation, one should nevertheless recognize the potential value of literature as a means of developing social understanding. It is unlikely that any formal course in psychology or social problems could perform quite the function illustrated by the discussions in literature classes reported at the opening of this chapter. Their special characteristic was the element of personal emotion that permeated the students' treatment of these topics. In the argument about *A Doll's House*, some sort of identification with Nora had occurred. Yet the students felt free to show their feeling because ostensibly they were talking about Nora, not themselves. The discussion of any general topic concerning human nature or social relations arose from the students' own vicarious experience and their feelings about it. Their general concluding insights grew out of a process accompanied by definite emotional pulls toward various points of view. The whole discussion was *felt* as well as thought.

If the works read had had no emotional impact upon the student, any discussion would have been empty verbiage. Nevertheless, we need not stop there. The discussions that we have described were fundamentally attempts by the students to work out some rational understanding of their reactions. They were involved in the

task of managing their emotions—something very different from ignoring or repressing emotions. In this way, they were being helped to develop the habit of bringing thought to bear upon emotional responses—the starting point for intelligent behavior.

Thus, the discussion that grows out of literary experiences may provide a means of helping young people to develop the habit of reflection. Literature makes possible rehearsals of the struggle to clarify emotion and to make it the basis of intelligent and informed thinking. This creates a situation that possesses a certain parallelism to the emotionally colored life situations which engender conflicting inner attitudes and give rise to thought. The insights and ideas that result from such an experience tend to become assimilated into the individual's active equipment because they are embedded in a matrix of emotional and personal concerns. Hence, literature provides an educational medium through which the student's habits of thought may be influenced. When this is more widely recognized, we may expect that literary materials will be introduced into many different phases of the curriculum.

The emotional quality of literature has sometimes tended to make the social scientist look at it askance as something that merely reënforces the student's natural tendency toward undisciplined emotion. Our earlier quotation from Professor Dewey (page 268) offers the rejoinder that what we need is more emotions, not less. Rationality, he reminds us, does not exist in opposition to emotion, but rather represents the attainment of a

working harmony among diverse desires. Instead of rejecting the emotional experiences possible through literature, the social scientist should recognize that these may provide a means of helping the student to achieve a functioning rationality.

We have already elaborated on the power of literature to develop the capacity for feeling, for responding imaginatively to the thoughts and behavior of others. In this chapter our concern has been to show how through discussion and reflection about his emotional response to literature, the student may learn to order his emotions and to face rationally people and situations with which he is emotionally involved. This power to transmit understanding of society in terms that will be personally assimilable is lacking in traditional social-science teaching methods. When literary experiences are made the material for reflective thinking, they may be one means of providing this sorely needed linkage between thought and feeling and behavior.

Teachers of the social sciences are coming to recognize the value of the concreteness and vividness of literary treatments of their subjects. History textbooks append references to historical novels, or students are assigned short stories and novels about foreign countries or about different types of social background. If the French Revolution is being studied, for example, *A Tale of Two Cities* is read. The idea back of this usually seems to be that the literary treatment gives increased sharpness to the ideas or information that the teacher wishes to convey. The student is helped "to understand" the information

better through the more vivid and detailed descriptions offered by the literary treatment; a novel, for instance, helps him to visualize the people and the scenes that his history book treats. That, certainly, is one of the contributions of literature.

The problem is usually left on this level, with literature considered a tool for vividly conveying facts. But we have shown that the repercussions of this kind of understanding through vicarious experience do not end there. Literature gives more than enhanced visual or sensuous concreteness. From this vividness of perception may flow a sense of the human and practical implications of the information that has been acquired. This information is no longer mere words to be rattled off; the words now point toward actual human situations and feelings. Thus, after the reading of *I Went to Pit College*, the statement that Pennsylvania has a large number of mines will have reality in terms of human beings, their activities, their needs and struggles, and will probably evoke some emotional attitudes. The meaning attributed to the term *understanding* in our earlier discussion indicates that we must go beyond the sense of literature as a pedagogic device for giving sugar-coated information.

The teachers of social studies as well as the teacher of English should hold firmly to this fact that literature is something "lived through," something to which the student reacts on a variety of interrelated emotional and intellectual planes. Therein lie its many educational potentialities.

This stress on the value of the literary experience in

no way rules out the organized study of psychological and sociological subjects. On the contrary, students should be given even greater opportunities for that kind of consideration of social problems. Our concern is rather that such social studies should be made more practically fruitful than they are at present. The question as stated at the end of Chapter 6 is: How can the student be brought to the point of assimilating scientific understanding of man and society so thoroughly that it will translate itself into the very attitudes, decisions, and actions that constitute his own life? Unfortunately, this has too seldom happened. Many even of the college-bred members of the present adult generations tend to think only of the conditions that affect them most directly. They do not attempt to reconsider their own opinions in the light of general social, economic or psychological theory, nor do they attempt to envisage the general human effects of the particular social measures they espouse as immediately beneficial to themselves. More frequent use of literary materials by the social-science teacher may be one means of furthering the assimilation of social-science concepts into the student's habits of judgment and choice in his actual personal and political life.

The will to learn, it has been said, rests on a state of dissatisfaction with our present knowledge. Our earlier discussion of the clarification of the student's response might be translated into these terms. We saw that in most cases the interchange of ideas would lead the student to become dissatisfied with his present knowledge about human relations. He realizes that lack of information lim-

its his ability either to participate fully in the experience offered by the book or to fit the experience into some rational structure of ideas. Through his response to books, the student can be made emotionally as well as intellectually aware of the need for further information. The reading of literature, therefore, might be made a means of arousing "the will to learn" what is already available concerning man and society. Furthermore, sociological or psychological information sought in this way is more likely to become part of the student's working equipment and to be integrated into the stream of his thought and behavior.

The social-science teacher must, of course, solve problems concerning the extent and manner of his use of literary materials. It is not within the scope of this book to do more than recognize this. One such problem is the relation between literary experience and direct observation through field trips, which offer another possible source of personal response to social facts.³ His funda-

³ Literature, for instance, might be used as a substitute when such direct observation is not possible. It has not sufficiently been recognized that in many cases literary materials might even be an excellent means of introducing the student to the subject or problems to be studied, as a preliminary to direct observation of actual conditions. The analysis in the preceding chapter of the development of social sensitivity through literature is also relevant here, since social-studies teachers have sometimes been dismayed at their students' indifference and even callousness to what they observed during field trips.

The case history is another approximation toward personal experience. Here the theory is that by reading about specific individuals or situations illustrating scientific generalizations, the student will understand their meaning in terms of human life. The extent to which this happens will depend, probably more than is recognized, on the literary effectiveness with which the case history is presented. In addition to the more scientifically controlled and studied case history, it seems likely that the

mental problem will concern methods of bringing about in the student's mind a perception of the general implications of the particular social conditions or problems experienced vicariously through literary works. In these, the student identifies himself with particular human beings living under clearly realized conditions and meeting vividly felt problems. The teacher's task is to insure the transition from this concern with particular instances to a concern with the general social conditions or basic factors involved.⁴

social-science teacher should utilize the surer emotional and intellectual effects of literary treatments of the human situations and general social conditions with which his particular science concerns itself.

⁴ The teacher whose main responsibility is the development of literary sensitivity will be less impatient for this transition to occur and will depend on repeated literary experiences and discussions to accomplish it. The social-studies teacher will probably consider this too time-consuming, given his desire to impart a body of relevant information. To follow up the literary experience with a field trip that will reveal the particular human situation expressed in a great many lives might contribute to such generalization. To read a book such as Helen Woodward's *Three Flights Up* and then to visit the East Side of New York would be to see this intensely experienced individual case multiplied endlessly.

One of the things that may lead to the transition from the individual literary case to more general and objective consideration of problems is the realization that the presentation of the particular case has been affected by the personality of the author, his particular intention, and his particular attitude toward these problems. Students will be made to feel the need to determine whether the picture is an accurate one, whether the author wrote out of a complete knowledge of conditions, and whether there may not be contrasting or contradictory considerations that he did not offer. This will also help the student to see the superiority of the impersonal scientific investigation based on the study of as many cases as possible over generalizations based on limited personal experience. The need will be felt for controlled investigation and the correction of individual bias by objective analyses of accumulated facts. Thus the inculcation of the scientific spirit itself may grow out of personally felt needs arising from the attempt to understand the significance of a particular book or story.

The teaching processes described in Part Two of this book and in the present chapter—the challenge to the student to scrutinize his response and to formulate his own presuppositions—should further that kind of transition to general concerns. Conversely, all social-science discussions of general ideas should more frequently be translated back into terms of individual human beings. Such a shuttling back and forth between the abstract and the concrete, the general and the specific, which the use of literary materials might foster, would give social-science study immediacy and lasting value. The student would develop the habit of recognizing that behind any particular social situation there exists a general situation whose causes and effects should be understood. Equally important, he would be aware that any generalizations or statistical data about society, politics, economics, refer to the behavior of living, feeling people. He would also develop the habit of applying to his experience of particular people or situations the scientific attitude which seeks to evaluate and to act on the basis of adequate information.

The preceding remarks reflect our belief that the social-studies teacher shares with the literature teacher and indeed with all other teachers the same responsibility to develop completely functioning individuals. The incidental emphasis and methods of the social-science teacher may be different; he is interested in initiating his students into an understanding of the methods of research in his particular field and in giving his students some knowledge of the nature of its materials. Ultimately, however, these techniques and this information must become a part

of the equipment with which the student encounters actual life situations. In the functioning personality, there is not—and should not be—any demarcation between the attitudes toward human nature and society engendered by literature and by the social sciences.

The different “subject-matter” teachers in schools and in colleges will be helped by an understanding of how their various contributions toward a common goal are related to one another. Throughout, we have insisted that the literature teacher should have some knowledge of the fundamental methods and concepts of the social sciences. Our argument implies with equal force that the social-studies teacher should have some understanding of literature and literary study. He should see how the student’s increased literary sensitivity will make him a better potential social-science student.

Hence, everything that this book offers has relevance to the needs and concerns of the social-studies teacher. In order to utilize the electric potentialities of literature, he must clarify his understanding of the nature of the literary experience. He seeks also to aid his students to reflect on the psychological and social implications of their response, and to work out a more reasoned and emotionally balanced approach. When the social-science teacher is himself aware of the possible emotional and intellectual factors entering into the students’ literary experience, he can use literature to help them to arrive at more scientifically valid assumptions.

The value of such mutual understanding on the part

of members of the different disciplines has been recognized in those schools and colleges in which teachers work together in some sort of integrated course. Thus, the social-studies teacher is able to build on the emotionalized interests and warm personal attitudes aroused in the literature discussions, and the literature teacher is able to help the students to bring to bear upon their literary experiences the information and the insights provided by their social studies. Such an integrated course can be most economical and most fruitful. Fundamentally, however, its success will depend on the degree to which each of the teachers understands the methods and aims of the others and shares with them an integrated approach to knowledge and to human relations.

Our discussion has largely been phrased in terms of the "literature teacher." The few remarks above must suffice to indicate our belief that our view of the nature of the literary experience and of the possibilities inherent in the study and discussion of literature also has great importance for the teacher of sociology, history, or psychology. All that we have said earlier concerning the enrichment and clarification of the student's response and the development of more critical attitudes has pertinence to the social studies. Similarly, although the following illustrations of the type of social concepts assimilable through literature will be phrased in terms of the literature class, they are meant to apply to any relevant teaching situation, no matter what the title of the "course" or "unit" might be.

THE CLASSROOM DISCUSSIONS of *A Doll's House*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and other works reported at the opening of this chapter, and the various accounts presented earlier in the book are only a few of an infinite variety of possible illustrations. The study of literature may contribute in many different ways to the attainment of enriched understanding of life situations. Nothing could be more artificial than an attempt to set up some definite routine procedure through which students should be docilely led to given Q.E.D.'s of social understanding. One of the banes of educational systems today is the pressure upon the teacher to work out neat outlines of the ideas about literature which his students are to acquire. Once such an outline is made, there is a great temptation to impose it arbitrarily. The teacher becomes impatient of the trial-and-error groping of the students. It is so much easier all around if the teacher cuts the Gordian knot and gives the students the neat set of conclusions and the tidy set of labels he has worked out. We have already agreed, however, that to teach students a special vocabulary is not necessarily to give them new insights.

An illustration here may serve to underline this. A teacher of English in a high school, unusually aware of the adolescent's need to understand human development, decided to give his class a period of several weeks in which they could read novels that presented a life history. He started out by giving a series of lectures on the main points in developmental psychology. He provided an outline of some of the major problems and influences that

enter into the development of any personality. The students were then required to write essays on each biographical novel read, discussing the hero's development in the terms provided by the teacher's outline. The essays indicated that the pupils had read the novels with the aim of finding details to illustrate just those points mentioned by the teacher. The papers gave little indication concerning what the novels had meant to the youngsters themselves. The whole thing took on the nature of an exercise in which they attempted to apply to each novel as it passed in review the particular labels supplied by the teacher.

Despite his admirable initiative in breaking away from the usual academic routine of literature teaching, this teacher's aims were largely defeated by the unfortunate tendency to be satisfied when students have learned a vocabulary. His mistake was that he did not let the desire for organized understanding grow out of the reading of the novels. The pupils should have been permitted first of all to read those books in ways personal to themselves and thus to have participated emotionally in the growth and aspirations of the heroes and heroines. Becoming aware of certain similar problems in the lives of these characters, the students would then have been ready for the kind of analysis of life patterns which the psychologist can offer. The perception that the development of a personality is not a haphazard process would have grown out of the reading, not have been imposed upon it. The teacher would have played an extremely important rôle in fostering this. The students themselves would have

played an equally important rôle, however, and they would have achieved insights related to their own background and their own problems.

The possibilities that we are stressing lie in the spontaneous and largely unpredictable character of specific literary experiences. Given the great diversity of possible temperaments and possible backgrounds in any one student group, any discussion will tend also to develop a special character and focus. If the teacher seeks to take advantage of this, he will not attempt to impose any particular routine on the discussion but will let it grow out of the points of stress and the perplexities emphasized by the students themselves. This requires alertness and skill on the teacher's part. Thus he will be able to lead the students to arrive at understandings that have personal significance for them.

The necessity for presenting isolated classroom illustrations may also do injustice to another very important point. Certainly a few scattered discussions of literature such as we have described could have little or no influence on students' attitudes toward people. Any such influence can be the result only of the cumulative effect of many experiences with literature, many free interchanges of opinion between students and teachers, many such emotionally motivated insights. Moreover, the general intellectual tone of the school and the habits of thinking fostered by the entire school experience will modify the nature of the discussion in any single class. And, within the class, the basis for such spontaneous discussions must be slowly and steadily built up. The give and take of ideas

and the interplay between different personalities will in itself have a liberalizing influence. If through the repeated stimulus of literature, the students have again and again been able to start from their emotional differences and uncertainties and have had even on a slight scale the experience of working through to some rational understanding, it is probable that some gradual revision of their habits of feeling and thinking will occur. They will at least have been set upon the path that leads to the development of a rational approach to experience.

THE PERSONAL NATURE OF THE LEARNING PROCESS places a decided responsibility upon the teacher. In order to take advantage of the living relationship between his students and literature, he must himself be imbued with a feeling for the complex process by which social insights can grow out of vital response to literature. The areas of intellectual and emotional ferment are the points at which growth is possible in the student's mind and personality. The teacher must be ready at the right moment to introduce new concepts relevant to these growing points as they reveal themselves. He can do this only if he himself has thoroughly assimilated these concepts. The challenge of our first and sixth chapters can now be seen more clearly in its educational context. The teacher can perform his function successfully only if he is himself an integrated personality, clearly aware of the attitudes toward human nature and society which he is helping his students to assimilate.

This view of literature study is completely alien to the

old notion of "character building through literature," which consisted in giving the student, without any regard for his own needs and state of mind, a series of models of human behavior to imitate. We must also dissociate ourselves from any of the attempts to treat literature merely as a body of documents that may be brought forth to illustrate various sub-topics under the heading of human relations. We must beware of thinking that lists of books dealing with topics such as family, war, labor relations—let alone such moralistic topics as noble characters or great deeds of the past—will in themselves do the job that we have been envisaging.

It would very much lessen the teacher's responsibility if we could think entirely in terms of the "subject-matter" of literature. Our task then would be principally the assembling of such lists of books. That, unfortunately, is not the situation. Literature offers not merely information, but experiences. After all, the important thing is not whether a particular book presents a picture of contemporary marriage relations or describes the activities of the Eskimo but the way these subjects are treated by the author and the context into which they are integrated in the reader's mind. Does the image of marriage relationships present an attitude of resentment toward one or the other sex? Or does it offer the possibility of sensing the subtlety of temperamental adjustments involved in the achievement of happily shared lives? The significant thing is not that a book tells how the Eskimo fishes, builds his house, and wins his mate, but whether the book presents the Eskimo as a strange and remote being of a different species

from ourselves or presents him as another human being who happens to have worked out patterns of behavior different from those with which we are familiar.

To catalogue the great body of literary materials according to the basic attitudes they might convey would be a colossal task. It would be almost impossible to find any standards of judgment which could be generally agreed upon, principally because the effect of any book will vary with the attitudes and assumptions which each reader brings to it. Although we shall use terms drawn from the social sciences to discuss how literature may illuminate certain aspects of human nature and society, it should be apparent that we are concerned with the subtler and least easily catalogued modes of social understanding that literature communicates.

We do not wish to reënforce a current tendency to feel that one can necessarily create social understanding by assigning to students a group of novels or plays dealing with a social science topic. In some cases, the books alone might even strengthen prejudices.⁵ The value of book lists depends on how they are used and whether the teacher selects from them in the light of his students' or his classes' needs.

Moreover, we have found it necessary to maintain that the teacher must play an active part in the development of social understanding. He needs himself to possess an enlightened sense of human relations. Only then can he

⁵ As in the case of the student who read sympathetically presented novels about slum life and acquired an even greater contempt for "people who live like that."

help his students not only to experience what literature offers but also to derive new sensitivities from that experience and to evaluate it in personal and social terms. In the long run, therefore, this kind of illumination cannot be prescribed for by means of book lists, outlines, and routine procedures. It will depend in each case on the particular personalities and backgrounds of each group of teacher and students as well as upon the nature of the particular school setting.

WE CAN NOW without danger of misinterpretation turn to a consideration of some of the basic social concepts that may be illuminated by literary materials. Here we shall deal primarily with the ideas themselves, rather than the teaching process by which they are imparted. We assume the kind of teaching situation discussed in the earlier chapters, just as we assume an understanding that such concepts have significance for the individual only as they are incorporated into the framework of ideas with which he meets life experiences. It will be possible to mention only a few of the typical concepts discussed in Chapter 6. Our method will be to select certain fundamental ideas concerning man and society and to indicate how an awareness of them can emerge from the experience of literary materials.

It has not been the aim of this book to suggest the abandonment of the usual aims of literature teaching or to advocate discarding all the literary materials usually read. Nor does our theory imply a neglect of the usual study of the methods and philosophies of specific authors,

or a neglect of the usual study of literary history. Given the point of view set forth in Part Two, literary history, biographical information, and critical analyses of technique will not degenerate into routine studies considered as ends in themselves. They will have value because they throw light upon the literary experience, with all that it implies of personal emotion and social awareness.

The study of the history of literature, for instance, is often insufficiently motivated. The student learns about the sequence of literary movements, he memorizes the chronology of authors and works, but only because this seems to be information arbitrarily demanded. He learns it docilely for examinations, but forgets it very quickly. Chaucer, Swift, and Thackeray come to inhabit the same vague region in his mind. Despite the study of periods and chronology, most of our American students lack any sense of historical perspective.

One reason for this has been the tendency of the scholar or teacher to neglect to stress the fact that literary history is a branch of social history. The history of literature recounts the social activities of man in one special realm, just as does the history of politics or of industry. The various approaches to the study of literature parallel the approaches to the study of any of man's activities. Failure to make this apparent partially explains the usual sterility of the study of literary history.

THE STUDY OF LITERARY HISTORY constitutes a study of social history in two ways: First, since the writer is always a member of a particular society and a particular

social group, his work grows out of the various social, economic, and intellectual conditions of his time. Second—and this is the point which is least often recognized or exploited—the various *processes* of social history may often be studied more dramatically through literature than through any other phase of man's activities. Just because the field is somewhat more limited and because the individual's activities remain for us in the explicit form of written or printed works, literary history may be utilized, as it seldom is, for initiating the student into an understanding of general social mechanisms. It reveals clearly the nature of the individual's relation to the social group, as well as the nature of the forces molding the group itself. The student should be helped to apply to other phases of man's life the ideas concerning historical processes derived from literary history. We have usually thought of social history as illuminating literary history. Why should we not think of the history of literature as one part of social history and as a means of throwing light on fundamental tendencies in social history?

Present-day scholarship and teaching are giving increasing recognition to our first point. The writer is being studied more as a member of society, and his work is viewed in relation to the various social and intellectual pressures of his time. Whether one studies Christopher Marlowe, Charles Dickens, or John Galsworthy, Emily Dickinson or W. H. Auden, these considerations are important. As we saw in Chapter 2, the

student should be led to seek additional light on particular works through such a study of authors in their social setting. But students should also see how this information reveals the way social forces mold the individual.

We have already recalled that literature is not a photographic mirroring of life but is the result of a particular socially patterned personality employing particular socially fostered modes of communication. Much of what is considered purely "esthetic" criticism consists of definitions of the special temperamental attitudes of the author, the precise emotional tone of his work, and its particular philosophic approach. All of this it is essential that we understand before we can appreciate his special sense of life or evaluate the literary merits of his work. The study of his manipulations of literary technique (to which the term *literary criticism* is often too narrowly limited) is incidental to our desire to apprehend the special qualities of the novel or poem or play. Walter Pater, the apostle of esthetic criticism, limited his duties as critic to a clarification or definition of the special impression produced on him by literary works. Yet a study such as his *Wordsworth* deals with all the personal and social considerations that we have just listed.

From these literary concerns should arise an added awareness of the general concept that any individual—writer or bricklayer—with his special traits and techniques, is the result of interaction with his environ-

ment.⁶ This concept is often presented to the student only in the study of such topics as crime, juvenile delinquency, or politics. Yet this view of the individual is illustrated just as dramatically in the creations of the artist as in the acts of criminals or statesmen. Only by seeing how a concept of this sort applies throughout the whole range of his studies—social, scientific, or artistic—will the student be able to build up an integrated approach to human relations.

One of the usual approaches to the study of literature is the history of different forms—the novel, the drama, poetry, the essay. The student learns that in different periods these forms reflect different literary traditions. He is not made aware that literary traditions represent one type of crystallized social behavior. After all, environmental influences operate as much in an author's treatment of literary form and choice of theme as in any other phases of man's activity. The imagination of the Elizabethan dramatist, for instance, necessarily functioned within the framework of the various conventions and dramatic formulas of his day. Knowledge concerning dramatic conventions can help us to differentiate between those things in Elizabethan plays that the dramatist introduced because the Elizabethan audience expected it and those things that reflected the actual life about him.

⁶ Our references to "environment" necessarily include physical nature as well as the cultural setting. Various geographical determinists at the end of the last century exaggerated the influence of man's natural environment; nowadays we may tend to underestimate its influence, particularly on literature. See Aldous Huxley's entertaining essay on what Wordsworth's sense of nature might have been if he had lived in the tropics rather than in the gentle atmosphere of the Lake Country.

The very themes the dramatist selected were similarly nourished by the intellectual climate of his time. From study of a particular literary form at different periods there can arise the perception that the individual's activities and ideas in any sphere are necessarily directed by attitudes and patterns absorbed from his cultural environment.

Similarly, from the study of a literary period as a whole, there may result an understanding of this concept of the shaping pressure of the environment upon the individual. If he lives in a time when prose forms are highly valued and poetry neglected, he will tend most readily to express himself in prose. If he lives in an age when the drama is the dominant form, he will probably seek to express himself through that medium. Or if he uses some minor form, it will probably be selected from those in which his milieu shows some interest, as in the case of the Elizabethan sonnet. Indeed, the pressure of literary conventions is even more pervasive than that. Having grown up at a time when the heroic couplet is the common poetic mold, he will tend to express himself in its balanced and measured phrases, and freer patterns will seem rough and unpleasant to his ear. Thus, the study of eighteenth-century poetry or of eighteenth-century criticism of Elizabethan literature can serve to illustrate this concept of cultural conditioning.

It is often hard for the student to realize in a vivid or personal way that the ideas and behavior he accepts most unquestioningly derive their hold upon him from

the fact that they have been unconsciously absorbed from the society about him. He can be led from a perception of how this happens in the field of literature to an understanding of the similar process which crystallizes the individual's ideas concerning relations between people, ways of behavior, and ideas of right and wrong. Having observed so explicit a demonstration of how even the most gifted and intelligent authors are shaped by their environment, the student may come to recognize similar pressures upon all other phases of men's thought and activity. He should see that the existence of periods in literature with marked characteristics of style and subject-matter is the reflection in a narrow sphere of a general sociological fact.

The relationship of the individual to his environment can be approached from another angle. The student who becomes acquainted with the concept of cultural conditioning often may tend to exaggerate its implications. He may think of the individual as completely at the mercy of the dominant forces in the environment about him. This is as erroneous, of course, as is the earlier notion that the individual has completely free choice and self-determination. The study of Shakespeare in relation to the other Elizabethan dramatists may illuminate this problem in a way highly interesting to students. They have accepted the idea of Shakespeare as a supreme genius. Their introduction, however, to the tragedies of blood and particularly to Thomas Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy* usually brings sharp disillusionment. They find that much in Shakespeare's

Hamlet follows the outlines of earlier plays which also contain ghosts calling for revenge, avengers who are mad or feign madness, heroes who hesitate and soliloquize. They discover that Shakespeare often followed very literally the theatrical conventions of his own day. The student's first reaction usually is to remove Shakespeare from his pedestal and to exclaim that he was merely a man of his own time, after all.

Reflection, however, brings a revision of this judgment. They begin to see that Shakespeare was thoroughly a product of a particular environment, and yet that, working within the patterns set by his time, he modified them and put his own unique stamp upon them. A comparison between his plays and contemporary ones of the same type, such as the romantic comedies or the tragicomedies, reveals the pervasive influence of his literary environment upon the individual, but it reveals also his ability to create something new and superbly individual out of the elements provided by his age. Moreover, these unique creations will influence writers who come after him. Through the study of literary details easily recognized by the student, he can be led to perceive within this limited sphere something of how in all phases of man's life the average individual, too, is not only molded by but also molds his environment.

EVEN MORE STRIKING is the light that the study of literary history may cast upon the process of social change. This should be understood as a process in time, involv-

ing the constant adjustment and readjustment of particular individuals to particular cultural patterns. This human view of social change can grow out of a study of the modifications over a period of time in authors' selections of subjects and choices of literary forms. The study of English literature from 1750 to 1830, for instance, offers dramatic possibilities for developing a vivid sense of the complex factors involved in any change in man's ways of thinking and behavior.

The concept of "cultural lag," for example, applies as much to literature as to any phase of history. In this period, through a study of verse forms and poetic diction, as well as through a study of subjects treated, we can see clearly how attitudes, mental habits, and social patterns that have taken root tend to persist even when they no longer serve a vital need. The hold of the heroic couplet, the endless minor variations on themes that had been fully exploited earlier in the century, the development of tricks of poetic diction to the point of absurdity, illustrate very forcibly the tendency of the average mind to follow already channeled grooves.

Against this background of persisting habits and conventions, the study of the beginnings of the romantic movement in the eighteenth century and its flowering in the early nineteenth century can illustrate the slow cumulative process of social innovation—the few signs earlier in the century of a slight departure from accepted attitudes toward man and nature in a poem here and there by a Lady Winchelsea or a Parnell; the

evidence of an increasing body of sentimental minor poetry, such as the "graveyard poems," that hints at new tendencies; the partial break with tradition represented by the Wartons or by Thomson; the harking back to literary precedents of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance to sanction rejection of the contemporary conventions; the curious transitional quality of Gray's poems or of Wordsworth's earliest verse; the full revolt bursting forth in the *Lyrical Ballads*; the resistance which Wordsworth, Keats, Shelley, and the others met from critics and readers still dominated by the Pope tradition in poetry; the slow education of an audience that would understand and appreciate their work.

These literary materials give vivid evidence that social change often comes about slowly and almost imperceptibly. At first a few minds here and there free themselves from the wornout attitudes and procedures that no longer satisfy new needs. Gradually the number of these non-conformists increases; their influence spreads; and ultimately their ideas may become the dominant ones automatically assimilated by young authors and readers, as in the case of the romantic view of poetry today. Thus, in his study of the rise of romanticism, the student can find dramatically portrayed the pull and tug of contending social phenomena. The tendency to hold on to old attitudes, on the one hand, is opposed by the struggle, on the other hand, to find fresher and more completely satisfying patterns. In other words, the relation between the processes of cul-

tural lag and social innovation is revealed as legitimately in literary history as it is in the history of technology or of political institutions.

In Chapter 6 we recalled the anthropologist's emphasis on the interdependence of the various aspects of any culture. The history of literature again demonstrates this fact that society is not a checkerboard of water-tight compartments. An understanding of what happens in the realm of literary activity requires the study of the accompanying economic, social, and political conditions. It would, for example, be false to explain the romantic movement entirely in literary terms as a revolt against eighteenth-century formalism. (Of course, this popular view of eighteenth-century literature is also oversimplified.) It is necessary to be aware also of the political ideals, the emphasis on a static and stratified society, which paralleled the eighteenth-century concern with balanced form and disciplined emotion. Romantic exaltation of individual feeling and aspirations was often as much a rebellion against this idea of the individual subordinate to a static social system as it was a rejection of the limitations of so-called classical standards.

Similar considerations arise no matter what period is studied. What, for example, were the forces at work in Elizabethan society that helped to make possible the flowering of the drama? What were the economic and social conditions that created so heterogeneous an audience for the theatre? What was the influence on the drama of the fact that the Court still played so central

an economic and social, as well as political, rôle? How did the religious and philosophic developments affect the sense of significant human problems? The student of literature as well as the student of other phases of social history must constantly recognize this interdependence of the various aspects of any society.

The anthropologists point out also that through this interaction of its different elements, a culture tends to develop some degree of integration, some sort of recognizable basic cultural pattern. Out of the interplay between the different forces at work in the society will tend to arise some set of dominant values or drives. These will determine whether a society values human life or military "glory," whether it phrases success in terms of material acquisition or ceremonial generosity, whether it gives greater prestige to wealth or craftsmanship or learning. The nature of this dominant pattern will make a great difference in the emotional overtones and in the very character of the various personal relations within that society.

Within the range of even a single literature such as that of England we encounter the reflection of a number of different cultural emphases—the sharp contrast between earthly and otherworldly values in medieval society, with its intense appreciation of both; the greater flexibility of Renaissance institutions, with the attendant zest for the free expression of individual personality; the increasing importance of materialistic bourgeois values in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries with accompanying emphasis on the acquisition of property

and on social prudence; the paradoxical reflection of bourgeois economic individualism in the romanticists' demands for personal freedom; their break with the utilitarian bourgeois view of life when the romantic artists translated their individualism into esthetic and spiritual values; the development of the physical and biological sciences creating a crisis in religious thought through their reënforcement of a naturalistic interpretation of man and the universe; and the increasingly frequent expression today of a collectivistic philosophy that stresses the individual's inescapable bonds with his fellow-men. The societies that express themselves through English literature seem to have developed varying degrees of integration. In some ages, one perceives a number of clear-cut sub-patterns, or even a number of contradictory patterns in a state of unstable equilibrium; in other ages all aspects of the society seem to reflect similar or parallel emphases.

Even such a sketchy listing should indicate the necessity for seeing how any literary work⁷ reflects or refracts the characteristic emphases of its own age. Our students read works produced in a great many different periods and social settings. They read (or should read) books that treat both contemporary and past American life; novels of French, German, or Russian life; modern versions of the Scandinavian epics; or Greek drama. In addition to this, the growing body of fiction, such as

⁷ And any other work of art. All that is said here about literature reflecting or refracting the values and drives of the surrounding society applies as well to the other arts.

Freuchen's *Eskimo*, dealing with primitive societies reveals how differently human life may be patterned in another culture. We have already referred to the diverse temperaments and the diverse images of personal success the student encounters in the literary works of different ages or even in the literature of a single period. Our students tend to take these differences for granted, without recognizing the extent to which each work implies a framework of values, ideas, mores, and modes of expression particular to some one cultural setting.

Nor do we usually help them to recognize that in any literary work they see the fundamental drives or the conflicting values of a society incorporated into the personalities and lives of ordinary men. When Mark Twain wrote *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, he was utilizing this insight. The Yankee embodies the habits, attitudes, and sense of values of one cultural pattern; the Arthurian knights reflect a totally different cultural pattern. The humor of this book arises out of our standing off and looking at each of these cultures. Our students need to develop a similar objective understanding of the basic social values reflected in literary works in any period, including our own.

Mark Twain, who not only made articulate his social setting but also contributed keen criticism of it, can serve further to illustrate our statement above: that the literature of any period reflects, in addition to the dominant emphases, criticism of the accepted values or signs of emerging attitudes. For, as we have recalled, it has often been through literature that when the time

was ripe man's adherence to the new images and goals has been won. Particularly because of the oft-repeated fact that we live in a time of rapid social change, we should be aware of this tendency for literature to reveal the points of growth in a society.

Here it is that the student's sense of the continuity of the literary stream as a part of the general continuity of social history is particularly valuable. Just as he will recognize in the literature of the past reflections of dominant drives and emerging alternative attitudes, so he will view contemporary literature as the expression of many minds working, slowly and often at cross purposes, but nevertheless sincerely, toward the creation of a new and more satisfactory system of common values. We have already emphasized the fact that through the experience of the literature of the past he will be able to come into contact with diverse views of the satisfactions to be derived from human life and society. These pictures will serve both as contrast and as commentary on our present-day emphases and on any newly offered alternatives for personal and social arrangements.

The corollary of this view of the interaction between different elements in a culture is that the introduction of new types of personalities into literature, the picture of new types of relationships, or the assertion of new values in life by the writer will have their repercussions upon the practical social and political life of an age. As Professor George Boas has recently insisted, even those works which are in opposition to the dominant attitudes of their time, as, for instance, the writings of

Dickens, Arnold, and Ruskin, are as much a part of their age as the writings that reflect its dogmas. Subtract the works of Dickens and the others from the Victorian Age and it would be something different from that age as we now understand it. The tendency to speak in terms of the social and political "background" of literature is misleading, since it implies that the background existed apart from the literature. Professor Boas thus underlines the general social concept which maintains that all aspects of any culture tend to act and react upon one another.

Another point requires clarification: Works of literature do not inevitably mirror life. In fact, it was earlier objected that teachers of literature may not sufficiently concern themselves with making their students aware of the fact that literary works do not "hold the mirror up to nature." Often the work can best be understood as "a slice of life seen through a temperament." The poem, play, or novel reflects the social philosophy of the author, or it may present a picture of people and situations dictated by the dominant literary conventions of the age in which the author lived. Again, it may be that only the life of a limited group in the society finds any sort of reflection in the literature of a given period. (Typical examples are Restoration comedy or the triangle situations in French novels.) Often, moreover, certain literary trends (for example, the novels of Sir Walter Scott, the great mass of romantic poetry) may represent an attempt to escape from the realities of the society in which the authors live.

Part of a sound equipment for understanding and judging literature is a knowledge of the possible factors, personal obsessions, class bias, political aims, that may color the images of life the writer chooses to create. It would be absurd to let our students think that the novels of futility such as those of F. Scott Fitzgerald reflected the whole picture of life in the nineteen-twenties. It would be equally absurd to let them think of Elizabethan drama as a literal transcript of life in England at that time. Only by being aware of such considerations could the student arrive at any sound judgment of the contribution of, for example, Ben Jonson.

The student has to be provided with the tools for weighing the various images of life that he encounters in books. This means that often he must turn from the literary work to other sources of information, whether those be the materials offered by the historian, the literary scholar, the sociologist, the anthropologist, or the psychologist. It is important, both from the point of view of literary criticism and from the point of view of preparation for actual living, that he should be thus stimulated to evaluate the moral and social implications of the images of life encountered through literature. Fundamental to such an approach is some understanding of such general social concepts as we have been discussing.

* THE PRECEDING REMARKS on cultural integration have led to a transition from general social processes working themselves out in literary history and methods of lit-

erary creation to those processes as they are exemplified in the images of individual lives offered by specific literary works. In Chapter 6 we pointed out that the various social sciences are attempting to discover the significant forces that contribute to the development of personality. We stressed the concept that the human being is a complex of qualities and habits which are the end result of a great many different forces converging upon and interacting with the individual organism. This developmental approach requires that we see the personality in relation to the whole stream of the individual's life, the various influences to which he has been subjected, and the situations and events through which he has passed. The human being, as we see him functioning in society, is the product of the particular ways in which his innate physical and mental endowment has been shaped, stimulated, or repressed by external conditions.

Ideas about human growth and development are the very stuff of literature. The process of cultural conditioning which was illustrated by the author's choice of literary forms is seen operating even more clearly in the images of life that the author places before us. In the course of any one year's reading, the student usually encounters books dealing with personalities in a wide variety of environments, but he is not always led to think about this. The personal strivings, the ethical problems, the social conflicts which we share through books are often part of social patterns very different from our own. With Macbeth, Milton's Adam and Eve, Jane

Eyre, Adam Bede, Soames Forsyte, Clyde Griffiths, Doremus Jessup, we struggle vicariously with diverse social codes created by their respective environments. Because Hardy placed the problem of the influence of environment in the center of attention, students are often led to associate this question only with his works. Any writer, and particularly any novelist or dramatist, treats some aspect of this basic process by which the individual human being inevitably lives out his life in terms of the social structure, the moral code, and even the emotional habits which he has acquired through interaction with his specific environment.

As we become more clearly aware of forces that pattern our lives, we acquire a certain power to resist or modify these forces. (See page 182). For this reason, we have insisted so much on the importance of an understanding of the concept of cultural conditioning. We should not neglect the opportunity to give the student this valuable insight that almost any work of literature offers. To return to our illustration, *Hamlet*: On the one hand, our students should be permitted to perceive in personal terms relevant to life today the nature of Hamlet's problem (such a "modern" interpretation as, for example, that he is a contemplative man caught in a situation demanding action). On the other hand, we should be equally careful to point out to our students that Hamlet's problem is bodied forth in specific terms of the code of "eye for eye, tooth for tooth"—a code archaic in Shakespeare's day as well as our own. Ob-

viously, no play about a man of Hamlet's general social and intellectual status in our own time would present him as automatically assuming that society expected him personally to kill the murderer of his father.

The fear has been expressed (page 260) that the constant reading of literature of the past might tend to perpetuate the hold of anachronistic images of behavior. Perhaps one way of counteracting this is to make our students aware of the degree to which literary works may make us, as in *Hamlet*, submit vicariously to a cultural pattern and a code of behavior different from our own. Out of recurrent awareness of this fact the student may develop some immunity to archaic images and some objectivity toward the cultural situation in which he himself is immersed. Thus without inner confusion or maladjustment to contemporary reality he will be able to profit from the breadth of experience, the flexibility of imaginative insight, and the sensuous enrichment which literature can impart.

THE VARIOUS OTHER CONCEPTS concerning human growth and development sketched in Chapter 6 are equally implicit in the great body of literary works. There are innumerable novels, for example, whose heroes or heroines we can accompany from birth to maturity. Novels such as *Tom Jones*, *Great Expectations*, *The Way of All Flesh*, *Of Human Bondage*, *Sons and Lovers*, *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, *The Last Puritan*, *Pelle the Conqueror*, *Jean Christophe* im-

ply the whole developmental approach to personality.⁸ As the student shares the life of the hero or heroine, he perceives some of the problems and psychological processes involved in the interaction between the growing human creature and his environment: the child in a world of adults, taking on their behavior and standards, extremely sensitive to their acceptance or rejection of him; the emergence of the child's sense of himself as a separate person, and his struggles to attain some kind of integrated personality; the environmental aids or obstacles to the attainment of this personal and social independence; the necessity for resolving problems and conflicts created by the fact that he is a member of a particular family and of a particular economic and social group; the impact of different religious and ethical systems; the need to make some kind of sexual adjustment; the way all of these factors affect the individual's image of himself and the crystallization of his attitudes toward others; the way the individual's sense of the satisfactions worth striving for depends largely on his social environment; the variety of possible attitudes of acceptance or rejection toward the dominant conventions of his environment; the fact that a life viewed from one angle may be a failure, but viewed from another may be highly successful; the element of continuity in any life history.

Such a developmental approach to personality is

⁸ We might have drawn such familiar illustrations with equal ease from novels presenting the life of a girl. A bibliography of prose fiction classified under such headings is being prepared by Mr. Elbert Lenrow for the Commission on the Secondary School Curriculum.

equally applicable to biography, of course. We have seen how the traditional study of literary history can be given general significance and intellectual motivation. Similar pointedness could be given to the traditional study of writers' lives. Too often studying an author's biography consists merely in learning the chronology of events. If the personality was in conflict with his environment or maladjusted in any way, as in the case of Shelley or Keats, the student's tendency is probably to think this the result of artistic queerness. The highly marked personalities of most literary figures, their sensitivity to the world about them, and their articulateness make their biographies particularly vivid material for viewing the complex factors that enter into the crystallization of personality.

A study of various biographies of the same person is another means of making the student conscious of different interpretations of what are the important factors in personality development. Such a point of view would do much to vivify the usual routine study of authors' lives—as it would, of course, illuminate the study of any biographies, whether of statesmen, scientists, explorers, or teachers. There seems to have been in recent years a revival of interest in all sorts of biographies—all the more reason for helping our students to develop from this reading some general framework of ideas concerning the growth and development of the human being.

The province of literature, we have said, is all that man has thought and felt and created. We might go on endlessly discussing how literary works embody one or

another phase of man's social life, or reveal one or another potentiality of human temperament, or clarify one or another process of individual or group development. We might, for example, have referred to the great body of works that express the broad gamut of social arrangements, temperamental adjustments, conflicts and disillusionments, joys and fulfilments that have grown out of the relations between man and woman. We have already suggested how literary works whose theme is love, courtship, and marriage may give the adolescent reader not only an emotional outlet and psychological preparation, but also an historical and cultural perspective.

We might multiply indefinitely such suggestions about how various bodies of literature throw light on man's life—in, say, the relations between races, nations, and classes, or between groups such as the artists and their public. Or we might point out how through literature we can apprehend the meaning, for the individual life, of different religious and philosophic attitudes. What it means to the individual to live in an agricultural or an industrial economy, in a rigid or a flexible class system; how variously family relationships can be patterned; what problems face members of different groups in our own society today—the artists, the laborers, the sharecroppers, the Jews, the Negroes, women, youth; what social and economic philosophies inspire men today—these and innumerable other questions about man and society might be illuminated through literature.

The study of American literature offers the student abundant opportunities for social insights especially relevant to his own problems. He can derive from our literature valuable understanding of the social conditions and social processes that are characteristic of our extraordinary history. Our whole literature bears the stamp of the fact that our writers have been living in a new country only gradually being created out of man's primitive struggle with nature. Through the works of American authors from Puritan days to the present one sees a cultural heritage drawn from various Old World sources, and particularly from England, taking on new overtones, absorbing new values, being slowly merged in a new cultural synthesis. The emphasis throughout this book on the social values and insights implicit in literary experience seems self-evident in relation to American literature. Our writers, almost every one, have in one way or another been conscious of their unique cultural setting and have sought to reflect it, to utter its essential spirit, to castigate its weaknesses, to sing its hopes and aspirations. Even those writers who have seemed to stand aside from the life about them have usually been seeking in their way to create something of the beauty or the subtlety that they felt their environment lacked.

The problem of the American writer has been to utilize everything of value from his literary heritage without letting it screen from him the special qualities of the new way of life about him. Seeking to remain a part of the splendid current of European literary tradi-

tion, he has at the same time struggled to grasp and make articulate the nature of our unique American experiment in living. With varying degrees of success, our writers have sought to use or remold the traditional forms in order to express the energetic spirit of a pioneer society. American literature reveals the convergence of a number of cultural problems produced by the intermingling of many peoples under the conditions imposed by a new land, during a period of economic, social, political, and philosophic readjustment throughout western civilization. For it has been the task of our writers to give utterance to the complex problems of a society in process of creation and yet to place these problems in their larger setting of changing scientific, political, and philosophic thought in the modern world.

The student can be helped to see how various writers have illuminated different facets of this process of the creation of a new society. For example, many writers have given sensitive expression to the problems of the immigrant, in his adjustments both to his new environment and to the cultural gap between himself and his Americanized children. Even the great body of regional literature makes vivid the heterogeneous and complex nature of our American society. Or again, there is the growing number of works that express the strains and stresses of our economic life and reflect the strivings of sensitive temperaments toward the creation of a more democratic and humane way of life. Works such as these can aid the student in his struggle to cope with the society about him, for through them he can come

to understand the nature of the past out of which it has grown and can become aware of the special forces at work in it today.

It would not be appropriate to the aims of this book, however, to elaborate on the innumerable illustrations of different areas of human relations. Our concern is with the general philosophy of literature study. The examples already given may suffice to make clear how increased understanding of human nature and society may spring from the study of literature. As the teacher himself comes to view his own literary experiences in this way, he will be able to make the study of any literary work a means for fostering in his students the capacity for such comprehension.

WE HAVE SOUGHT THROUGHOUT to speak in terms that would suggest the gradual discovery of ideas and insights by the student through actual literary experience and reflection upon it. For the same reason we have chosen to discuss general social concepts rather than specific informational topics such as family relations, labor relations, juvenile delinquency, or war. For we have maintained that only by seeing how certain basic concepts apply throughout the range of all his studies—artistic, scientific, or social—will the student be able to build up an integrated approach to human relations. In this way he will develop certain fundamental understandings and critical attitudes that he will be able to apply even to those fields or unforeseen situations which his school courses have not covered.

Such recognition of recurrent basic concepts encountered through a variety of approaches to knowledge is probably the soundest kind of "correlation." It is not half so important that the student should acquire history, sociology, and literature simultaneously as it is that he should see exemplified in each of these fields certain unifying concepts concerning human nature and society.

Similarly, outlines of integrated courses are much less important than the teacher's possession of an understanding of how the particular body of knowledge with which he is concerned is related to the rest of man's life. Certainly, we have urged that there is much to be gained from a breaking down of the old rigid subject-matter divisions. In many schools great progress has been made along this line through the development of integrated curriculums. But the success of any such new procedures must depend ultimately on whether or not the teachers themselves have assimilated such an integrated and humanistic point of view.

After all, even in schools and colleges where there are rigidly separate departments, the individual teacher can still do much to prevent compartmentalization in the students' minds. Even within the limits of the old subject-matter divisions, the teacher can communicate to his students a sense of his particular subject in its living context. In his class, they can encounter echoes and new incarnations of ideas gained in other classes. They can be made to feel the human implications and overtones of a particular body of knowledge. Learning



can be made a process of perceiving wider implications and of relating them to the central core of human values.

As more of his fellow-teachers acquire such insight, they will eventually develop external procedures and curriculum arrangements more expressive of their sense of the organic nature of knowledge. Only those integrated courses or "core" curriculums which have grown out of such attitudes on the part of the teachers can have much chance of initial success. If such experiments are sometimes unsatisfactory, the fault is not with the idea of integration or synthesis, but with those who have sought to execute it. They will become more successful as they themselves acquire the point of view. Let us seek to develop more flexible and integrated curriculums, but always with the understanding that the prime essential is such flexibility and such an organic approach to knowledge in the teacher's own mind.

WE ARE PARTICULARLY FORTUNATE, we whose privilege it is to initiate young people into the wealth of all that men have expressed of themselves and their life through the art of words. For we are concerned with developing in our students the capacity for one of the most balanced and most complete modes of experience that mankind has developed.

The literary experience has been seen to reside in the synthesis of what the reader already knows and feels and desires with what the literary work offers—the patterned sensations, emotions, and ideas through which

the author has sought to communicate his sense of life. Our eyes must always be directed toward that living moment of interaction between the work of art and the personality of the reader. We shall seek, on the one hand, to increase our student's receptivity to the full impact of the work, and on the other hand, to broaden the personal context of emotions and ideas into which this response will be incorporated. The development of literary appreciation will depend upon a reciprocal process: An enlargement of the student's understanding of human life leads to increased esthetic sensitivity, and increased esthetic sensitivity makes possible the harvesting of more fruitful human insights from literature. Our efforts to heighten the student's appreciation of the formal qualities of the literary work will be organically related to our effort to enrich his sense of human values.

Our awareness of the highly personal nature of the literary experience will protect us from the deadening influence of routine. For we shall realize that the student may derive from literature intimate benefits perhaps not visible to us, yet more precious than anything we might didactically impose. Literary works may help him to understand himself and his own problems more completely and may liberate him from his secret self-doubtings and personal anxieties. Literature's revelation of the diverse elements of our complex cultural heritage may free him from the provincialism of his own necessarily limited environment. Books may often provide him with an image of the kind of personality and way of life which he will seek to achieve. Our contribution toward these potential

ministrations of literature can be at least to provide him with as broad a gamut of literary experiences as possible. Above all, we must be constantly scrupulous not to place between the student and literature any kind of academic screen that may hinder this spontaneous personal relationship.

Because the literary experience tends to involve both intellectual and emotional facets of the personality in a manner that parallels life itself, the insights attained through literature may become assimilated into the matrix of attitudes and ideas which constitute character and govern behavior. Hence our opportunity to develop in the student the habit of reflective thinking within the context of an emotionally colored situation. 5.

AT THE OUTSET, it was said that we teachers of literature have underestimated our possible contribution to the student's equipment for successful living. This book has attempted to reveal how much the experience and study of literature have to offer that is vitally relevant to the crucial needs of personalities involved in the conflicts and stresses of life in our changing society. Indeed, literary experiences might be made the very core of the kind of educational process needed in a democracy.

If we only do justice to the potentialities inherent in literature itself, we can make a vital social contribution. As the student vicariously shares through literature the emotions and aspirations of other human beings, he can gain heightened sensitivity to the needs and problems of others remote from him in temperament, in space, or in 6.

social environment; he can develop greater imaginative capacity to envisage the meaning of abstract laws or political and social theories for actual human lives. Such sensitivity and imagination are part of the indispensable equipment of the citizen of a democracy.

But our potential social contribution includes even more than that. More than any other group of teachers, we have at our disposal potent unexploited means for assisting the student in the two phases of his development usually neglected by orthodox educational procedures, but essential for successful life in a heterogeneous, democratic society seeking to create more satisfactory ways of life. First, the imaginative participation in the wide variety of alternative philosophies and patterns of behavior accessible through literature, and the development of the power to reflect upon them and evaluate them, can liberate the student from anachronistic emotional attitudes no longer appropriate to the conditions of modern life. Second, having freed himself from the tyranny of attitudes and ideas ill adapted to reality, the youth need not be left in a state of paralysis of the will, for literature can also nourish the emotional impetus toward more fruitful modes of behavior. Literary experiences may help to fasten his emotions upon new and happier types of relationships or upon the images of new and more socially valuable satisfactions to be derived from life. Thus, he may acquire the sympathy and insight, the critical attitudes, and the sense of human values needed for his creation of new ideals and new personal and social goals. The organic nature of the literary experience pro-

vides some assurance that such new understandings will be assimilated emotionally as well as intellectually. There will already be at work in him impulses toward the kind of active behavior needed to create a new way of life.

Obviously, we cannot hope that literature will operate in these ideal ways merely through our making books available to our students. Only as we literature teachers promote these latent possibilities can we hope to approximate toward this ideal picture of our social influence. This book has attempted to indicate some of the awarenesses required of the teacher for the attainment of these ends. Inevitably, for good or ill, we influence the nature of the student's understanding of human personality and society. That influence will be a beneficial one only if we possess an awareness of the complex problems that this book has attempted to make articulate.

Preëminently, we ourselves must possess a love of literature and a living sense of all that it offers. And we should strive chiefly to avoid unconscious inculcation of our own bias, our own personal preoccupations, and our own unrecognized assumptions concerning human beings and social values. Our task is sincerely to reënforce the student's own efforts to acquire a valid understanding of the factors that pattern human life. We must encourage and aid him to create for himself the flexible mental habits and the humane system of values that will be relevant to the life that he himself must live under the complex and fluid conditions of contemporary society. Only then will he evolve a sound framework of attitudes and

ideas into which to integrate the ordered sensuous, emotional, and intellectual perceptions derived from literature.

Our society needs not only to make possible the creation of great works of art; it needs also to make possible the growth of personalities sufficiently sensitive, intelligent, and humane to be capable of creative literary experiences. In the pursuit of such ideals, we shall make the teaching of literature a function worthy of the humane nature of literature itself. Literary experiences will then be a potent force in the educational process of developing critically minded, emotionally liberated individuals who possess the energy and the will to create a happier way of life for themselves and for others.

HINTS FOR FURTHER READING

(This list is intended primarily as a supplement to Chapter 6. Any one who glances at this before reading the book is asked first to read at least pages 30 and 149. He will thus avoid the misapprehension that literature teachers are being prescribed a "course of reading" in all of the fields represented below.)

These suggestions are provided in case the reading of Chapter 6 has led to the desire to become further acquainted with general approaches or live problems in some of the areas mentioned. The list makes no pretensions at inclusiveness, and the books cited do not necessarily reflect the present writer's point of view. These references indicate a few among the many books that offer stimulating treatments of problems concerning human nature and society, or that clarify concepts of possible interest to the literature teacher. In a number of the books the specialist is concerned with expressing clearly and simply the human implications of his materials.

It would be impossible to make a definite statement of bibliographical "sources" for this volume, since it presents a synthesis worked out in the course of a number of years of practical teaching. My most obvious debt is to the works of Professor John Dewey and to George Santayana's *Life of Reason*.

BOAS, George, *A Primer for Critics* (Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins Press, 1937).

DEWEY, John, *Art as Experience* (New York, Minton, Balch and Co. 1934).

PARKHURST, Helen Huss, *Beauty* (New York, Harcourt, Brace and Co. 1930).

PRALL, D. W., *Æsthetic Analysis* (New York, Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1936).

RICHARDS, I. A., *Practical Criticism* (New York, Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1929).

——, *Principles of Literary Criticism* (New York, Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1930).

SANTAYANA, George, *Reason in Art, The Life of Reason*, Vol. IV (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1924).

- SANTAYANA, George, *The Sense of Beauty* (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1896).
- , *Three Philosophical Poets* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1922).
- BENEDICT, Ruth, *Patterns of Culture* (Boston, Houghton Mifflin Co., 1934).
- BOAS, FRANZ, *Anthropology and Modern Life* (New York, W. W. Norton and Co., 1928).
- , ed., *General Anthropology* (Boston, D. C. Heath and Co., 1938).
- , *Primitive Art* (Oslo, H. Aschehøng and Co., 1927).
- CALVERTON, V. F., ed., *The Making of Man: An Outline of Anthropology* (New York, The Modern Library, 1931).
- LINTON, Ralph, *The Study of Man* (New York, D. Appleton-Century Co., 1936).
- MEAD, Margaret, *Coming of Age in Samoa* (New York, William Morrow and Co., 1928).
- , *Growing Up in New Guinea* (New York, William Morrow and Co., 1930).
- , *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies* (New York, William Morrow and Co., 1935).
- , ed., *Coöperation and Competition* (New York, McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1936).
- SAPIR, Edward, *Language* (New York, Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1921).
- BEARD, Charles A., *The Discussion of Human Affairs* (New York, The Macmillan Co., 1936).
- BECKER, Carl L., *Everyman His Own Historian* (New York, F. S. Crofts and Co., 1935).
- DOBB, Maurice, *An Introduction to Economics* (London, Victor Gollancz, 1932).
- DOOB, Leonard W., *Propaganda: Its Psychology and Technique* (New York, Henry Holt and Co., 1935).
- FRANK, Lawrence K., "The Emancipation of Economics," *American Economic Review*, Vol. 14, March, 1924, pp. 17-38.
- , "The Principle of Disorder and Incongruity in Economics," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 47, December, 1932, pp. 515-525.

- HUBERMAN, Leo, *Man's Worldly Goods* (New York, Harper and Bros., 1936).
- LASKI, Harold J., *Democracy in Crisis* (Chapel Hill, N. C., University of North Carolina Press, 1933).
- LYND, Robert S., *Knowledge for What?* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1939).
- LYND, Robert S., and Helen M., *Middletown* (New York, Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1929).
- , *Middletown in Transition* (New York, Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1937).
- MACIVER, Robert M., *Society* (New York, Farrar and Rinehart, Inc., 1937).
- MITCHELL, Wesley C., *The Backward Art of Spending and Other Essays* (New York, McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1937).
- OGBURN, William F., *Social Change* (New York, B. W. Huebsch, 1922).
- SELIGMAN, E. R. A., and JOHNSON, Alvin, eds., *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences* (New York, The Macmillan Co., 1930–1935), 15 vols.
- VEBLEN, Thorstein, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (New York, Viking Press, 1924).
- WARE, Caroline F., and MEANS, Gardiner C., *The Modern Economy in Action* (New York, Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1936).
- American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 42, No. 6 (May, 1937). An issue devoted to articles on personality development.
- DOLLARD, John, *Criteria for the Life History* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1935).
- FRANK, Lawrence K., "Mental Security," Chapter VIII, in *Implications of Social Economic Goals for Education*, National Education Association, September, 1937.
- HORNEY, Karen, *The Neurotic Personality of Our Time* (New York, W. W. Norton and Co., 1937).
- MURPHY, Gardner, ed., *Approaches to Personality* (New York, Coward-McCann, 1932).
- PLANT, James S., *Personality and the Cultural Pattern* (New York, The Commonwealth Fund, 1937).
- SHERIF, Muzafer, *The Psychology of Social Norms* (New York, Harper and Bros., 1936).

- HALDANE, J. B. S., *Heredity and Politics* (London, Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1938).
- JENNINGS, H. S., *Prometheus: or Biology and the Advancement of Man* (New York, E. P. Dutton and Co., 1925).
- , *The Biological Basis of Human Nature* (New York, W. W. Norton and Co., 1930).
- COHEN, MORRIS R., *Reason and Nature: An Essay on the Meaning of Scientific Method* (New York, Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1931).
- DEWEY, John, *Experience and Education* (New York, The Macmillan Co., 1938).
- , *Experience and Nature* (Chicago, Open Court Publishing Co., 1925).
- , *How We Think* (Boston, D. C. Heath and Co., 1933).
- , *Human Nature and Conduct* (New York, The Modern Library, 1922).
- , *The Quest for Certainty: A Study of the Relation of Knowledge and Action* (New York, Minton, Balch and Co., 1929).
- LEVY, H., *The Universe of Science* (London, Watts and Co., 1932).
- RUSSELL, Bertrand, *Education and the Modern World* (New York, W. W. Norton and Co., 1932).
- , *Sceptical Essays* (New York, W. W. Norton and Co., 1928).
- , *The Scientific Outlook* (New York, W. W. Norton and Co., 1931).
- SCHRÖDINGER, Erwin, *Science and the Human Temperament* (New York, W. W. Norton and Co., 1935).
- THOULESS, Robert H., *How to Think Straight* (New York, Simon and Schuster, 1939).
- VEBLEN, Thorstein, *The Place of Science in Modern Civilization and Other Essays* (New York, B. W. Huebsch, 1919).

INDEX

- Abnormality, relative to the culture, 176-186
- Adler, Alfred, 165
- Adolescence, formative influence of literature on, 214-264; needs of, 44 f., 91 f., 96, 151 ff., 239 f.; relationships in, parallel adult, 273; social values and, 191-213; storm and stress, period of, 96-110; treatment in different cultures, 175 f., 180
- Albers, Edna, *Thicker Than Water*, 102 n.
- American literature, 319-321
- Anderson, Maxwell, *Winterset*, 117
- Anderson, Sherwood, *Poor White*, 110
- Anthropology, 17, 47, 97, 174-186, 306, 307
- Aristotle, 245
- Arnold, Matthew, 260, 311
- Art, democracy and, 198 ff.; for art's sake, 4, 7, 31, 36; formalism in, 36, 39 f.; human element in, 7, 62 f., 121 f., 140 f., 308 n.; human needs and, 39 f.; science and, 158 f.; values of, 31
- Arthurian legends, 16
- Artist, freedom for, 198 f., 241; scientist and, 158 ff.; social value of, 103, 178 f.; versus craftsman, 36
- Aryan label, 166, 185
- Auden, W. H., 298
- Austen, Jane, *Pride and Prejudice*, 11, 49, 74, 140, 241, 260
- Author, aim of, 23, 41 f., 59 f., 129-188; and his environment, 137-140, 298-300
- Authority, acceptance of, 112, 193; rebellion against, 47, 101 f., 178, 193-213, 239 f., 243, 261
- Human Comedy*, *The*, Honoré de Balzac, 6
- Benét, Stephen Vincent, *John Brown's Body*, 259 f.
- Bennett, Arnold, *Clayhanger*, 26, 247; *Old Wives' Tale*, 38, 134
- Beowulf*, 16
- Biography, as aid in appreciation, 136 ff., 145, 244; illuminates personality development, 316-318
- Blake, William, 60
- Boas, George, 310
- Book lists, classified, 294-296
- Bridgman, P., 257 n.
- Bromfield, Louis, *A Good Woman*, 50
- Brontë, Emily Jane, *Wuthering Heights*, 16, 36, 140, 314
- Browning, Robert, 38
- Buck, Pearl, *The Good Earth*, 47
- Business cycles, 189
- Business man, 103, 150 f., 179, 230, 240 f.
- Butler, Samuel, *The Way of All Flesh*, 6, 26, 315
- Byron, George Gordon, 227
- Campell, O. J., 157
- Capitalism, 188, 191-213, 251
- Cather, Willa, 240
- Certainty, dogmatic, 155-163, 191-213
- "Character building through literature," 294
- Chaucer, Geoffrey, 297
- Chekov, Anton, *The Darling*, 6
- Class differences, 150 f., 188; struggle, 166, 187
- Classics, 255-263
- Coleridge, Samuel Taylor, "Dejection," 70, 137
- Comedy, 42 f.
- Communalism, economic, 174

- Communication, basis of, 34, 138, 160 f.
- Compensation, psychological, 49
- Conrad, Joseph, *Lord Jim*, 12
- Conventions, social, 74, 102 ff.
- Cooper, James Fenimore, *The Last of the Mohicans*, 24
- Coöperativeness, in economics, 176, 191-213; in science, 163 f.
- "Correlation," 322
- Crime, correction of, 150 f.
- "Cultural lag," 304
- Culture, African, 184; Batciga, 175; Eskimo, 174, 294; determinism and, 182 f., 300-303; deviants from norms of a, 181 f.; diversity of types of, 25, 162 f., 174-186; influence of, 18, 142 ff.; integration of a, 177 ff., 306-311; Manus, 175; patterns of, 174-186; reflected in literature, 229-232, 308 f.; Samoans, 175, 184; social values relative to the, 191-213; Zuni, 174
- Curie, Eve, *Madame Curie*, 48
- Cyrano de Bergerac*, Edmond Rostand, 242
- Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy*, 73
- Darwin, Charles, *Origin of Species*, 157 n.
- Dead End*, Sidney Kingsley, 47
- Death, 113
- Deeping, Warwick, *Sorrel and Son*, 247
- Defoe, Daniel, *Robinson Crusoe*, 138 f.
- Dell, Floyd, *An Unmarried Father*, 50
- Democracy, 132; ethics of, 191-213; means of training for, 218 ff., 229, 254-328
- Development of individual, revealed in literature, 312-318; studied in novels, 290-292
- Dewey, John, 267, 268, 281
- Dickens, Charles, 298, 311; *David Copperfield*, 17, 26; *Dombey and Son*, 26, 259; *Great Expectations*, 315; *Hard Times*, 111; *Oliver Twist*, 117, 221; *A Tale of Two Cities*, 24, 282
- Dickinson, Emily, 298
- Discussions, student, accounts of, *passim*, 136-139, 142-145, 269-279; cumulative effect of, 292-293; effect on mental habits, 293; emotional element in, 270 ff., 281, 293; teacher's contribution to, 82-90; value of, 82-90
- Divorce, 190
- Dollard, John, *Criteria for the Life History*, 165 n.
- Dos Passos, John, *Manhattan Transfer*, 110
- Dreiser, Theodore, *An American Tragedy*, 9, 314
- Dumas, Alexandre, *The Count of Monte Cristo*, 24
- Economic order, art and, 178 f., 187 f.; child labor and, 220; democracy and, 191-213; determinism and, 187 f.; family and, 179; literature and, 140, 187 f.; personality-formation by, 171; property and, 175 f., 187, 196 f.; religion and, 187; science and, 157 ff.; security in the, 202 ff.; Supreme Court and, 220; taxation in the, 220; transition of present, 150 f., 191 ff.; women's place in the, 143, 178
- Economic determinism, 187 f.
- Economics, 189, 191-213
- Eddington, Arthur, *Stars and Atoms*, 157 n.
- Educational system, 3, 154-155; democracy and, 199-213; task of our, 212 f.
- Eliot, George, *Adam Bede*, 16; *Silas Marner*, 9, 12, 36, 109, 140, 260, 314
- Eliot, T. S., 259
- Elizabethan drama, 11 ff., 24, 145, 241, 300, 306
- Emotion, action and, 208 ff., 265 ff.; constructive thinking and, 267, 272, 280 f.; emancipation from blind, 151, 205-213; literature and, 44, 93, 214-217; necessity

- for, 211 f., 267 ff.; personality-pattern and, 214-264; reason and, 265-328; rôle in learning process, 215 ff., socially patterned, 105 f.
- Emotional patterns in literary works, 50 ff., 243 ff., 259
- Environment, influence of, studied in literature, 297-321
- Escape, through art, 4, 7, 47 f., 121 f.; through literature, 249-254
- Ethics, democracy, science, and, 191-213; free will and, 19 f., 169-174; indoctrination of codes of, 21 f., 35 f., 152 f.; need for a modern system of, 142, 191-213; Puritan code of, 22; relativism in, 153 f., 175-186; teacher's code of, 9 f., 152 f., 191 f.
- Evelina*, Frances Burney, 132
- Experience, literary, 32-64; vicarious, 217-222
- Extravert, 166, 230, 240
- Facts, function of, 33, 142, 149-213
- Family, attitudes toward the, 26, 100 ff., 173 f., 179, 209-211, 220, 321; security of child and the, 203 f.; types of, 230
- Fascism, 151, 220
- Feminism, 106 f., 142 ff., 178, 186, 209 f., 241 f., 261 n.
- Feudalism, 29, 194, 227
- Fielding, Henry, *Tom Jones*, 119, 140, 188, 315
- Fisher, Vardis, *April*, 242
- Fitzgerald, F. Scott, 110
- Flaubert, Gustave, 120
- Flexibility of mind, 123 ff., 155, 161-164, 188-213, 265 ff.
- Form, relation to content or matter, 53-62, 121 f., 144 f.
- Formalism in art, 36, 63 ff.
- Frank, Lawrence K., 214 n., 238
- Franklin, Benjamin, 241
- Freedom, for personal response to books, 78 ff.; basis for constructive training, 88 ff.; not enough in itself, 87 ff.
- Free will, 19 f., 169-174, 182-188, 302 f.
- Freuchen, Peter, *Eskimo*, 47, 309
- Freud, Sigmund, 14, 165, 188
- Gale, Zona, *Papa La Fleur*, 259
- Galsworthy, John, *The Forsyte Saga*, 6, 12, 26, 260, 298, 314
- Garland, Hamlin, *A Son of the Middle Border*, 9
- Gaskell, Mrs. Elizabeth, *Mary Barton*, 9
- Gissing, George, 140
- Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von, *Faust*, 244; *Werther*, 227, 260
- Gray, Thomas, 305
- Green, Paul, *The House of Connelly*, 117; *This Body the Earth*, 110
- Greek drama, 308
- Guest, Edgar, 114
- Hardy, Thomas, *Jude the Obscure*, 161; *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, 141; *The Return of the Native*, 11, 314
- Hatfield, W. Wilbur, 16 n.
- Hawthorne, Nathaniel, *The Scarlet Letter*, 22, 120
- History, aid to understanding literature, 24 f., 142, 232 f.
- Homer, 16; *Iliad*, 24, 259
- Horney, Karen, *Neurotic Personality of Our Time*, 165 n.
- Housman, A. E., *A Shropshire Lad*, 5, 115 f.
- Howard, Sidney, *The Silver Cord*, 276
- Howells, William Dean, *The Rise of Silas Lapham*, 12
- Huberman, Leo, *Society and Family Life*, 102 n.
- Hugo, Victor, *Les Misérables*, 111
- Human nature, 5 f., 140 f.; assumptions about, 9 f., 14 ff., 141; plasticity and complexity of, 161-213
- Humanitarianism, 220 ff.
- Huxley, Aldous, 140, 300 n.

Huxley, T. H., *Man's Place in Nature*, 157 n.

Ibsen, Henrik, *A Doll's House*, 26, 142 ff., 269 ff., 290

"Ideal experimentation" through literature, 27 ff., 260, 315

Identification by readers, 46 f., 108; with parent, 112

Immortality, 113

Independence, nature of, 270

Indian education, 69 f., 125

Individualism, economic, 108, 174; rugged, 179, 182, 187; social value of, 142 f., 189-213

Industrialization, 189

Infantilism, intellectual, 151, 199 ff.

Inferiority complex, 165

Integrated courses, 289, 321-323; teachers' qualifications for, 289, 322-323

Introvert, 166, 240

Irrelevant associations in reading, 113-126

Irving, Washington, *Rip Van Winkle*, 6, 8

Italian literature, 73

I Went to Pit College, L. Gilfilan, 283

James, Henry, *The Ambassadors*, 6, 109, 117, 241

James William, *Principles of Psychology*, 157 n.

Justice, 132, 195 ff., 219

Juvenile delinquents, 47, 321

Joyce, James, 259; *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, 315

Keats, John, "The Eve of St. Agnes," 114, 118, 123, 136 f., 305, 317

Knowledge needed for understanding literature, 129-144

Keliher, Alice V., *Life and Growth*, 98 n.

Kyd, Thomas, *Spanish Tragedy*, 302

LaBrant, Lou L., 85 n.

Lady, ideal of a, 226 f.

Lady Winchelsea, 304

Law in science, 158-168; of supply and demand, 166

Lawrence, D. H., "Piano," 114 f., 119, 140; *Sons and Lovers*, 140, 315

Lehmann, Rosamond, *Invitation to the Waltz*, 94

Lewis, Sinclair, *Ann Vickers*, 242; *Arrowsmith*, 48; *It Can't Happen Here*, 117; *Main Street*, 110, 314

Life, approach to, 27, 122, 152 f., 250 f.; art and, 40; curiosity about, 45, 101, 225 f.; in a democracy, 189-213; possibilities in, 3 f., 236 f.; significance of, 45 f., 52

Literary experience, 4 f.; critical analysis of the nature of the, 32-64; cumulative effects of, 292

Literary forms, history of, 300-303, 304, 306

Literary history, branch of social history, 297-312; illustrates social change, 303-306; processes of, illuminate social history, 298, 302

Literature, alleged opposition between science and, 156 ff.; as means of exploring possible choices, 236 f.; as transmitter of cultural pattern, 222-227; challenge of, 3-31; contemporary versus classic, 255-263; copybook theory of, 35; creates "will to learn," 284 f.; cultural setting and, 139, 187 n.; desirable range of, 254 ff.; escape, 246-254; does not mirror life, 237, 299, 311 f.; field trips and, 285 n.; fosters capacity for understanding others, 214-222; functions of, 263 f.; history of, 72 f., 135 ff., 139, 297-312; illuminates human development, 312-318; immediate effects of, 232 ff.; leisure and, 157; Marxism and, 117, 140; nature of experience of, 32-64; need to evaluate images of life

- in, 312; objectivity toward one's own problems through, 237 f.; obsolete images in, 27 ff., 260 ff., 315; personality pattern formed through, 216-264; proletarian, 140; province of, 5-9; reflects cultural integration, 306-311; release from neurotic fears through, 238-246; religion and, 110 f.; romantic love and, 223 f.; satisfactions of, 37-62; social alternatives and, 227-232; social approach to, 30 f.; social basis of, 299; social classes and, 111, 227; social sciences and, 149-213; social studies and, 282 ff.; stock responses to, 113-126; study of periods in, 301 f.; traditions in, 300, 302 f.
- Love, 114, 132; personal security and, 203 f.; romantic, 223 f., 227
- MacLeish, Archibald, *Public Speech*, 117
- Madison, James, 8
- Magazines, popular, 75, 120 f., 249-254
- Mann, Thomas, *Buddenbrooks*, 6, 240
- Mansfield, Katherine, 120; "Mr. Reginald Peacock's Day," 276
- Marks as an end, 76
- Marlowe, Christopher, 298
- Marriage, 14, 25 f., 74, 93, 104, 111, 124, 142 ff., 190, 267-272, 294
- Maturity, concept of, 201-213
- Maugham, Somerset, *Of Human Bondage*, 6, 98, 100, 315
- Maupassant, Guy de, 44, 120
- McDougall, William, 166
- Medicine, social basis of, 196 f.
- Meredit, George, 116, 118; *Diana of the Crossways*, 242; *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*, 26
- Middle class, 188
- Millay, Edna St. Vincent, 113
- Milton, John, 27, 260; *Paradise Lost*, 28 f., 110, 132, 313
- Mitchell, Margaret, *Gone with the Wind*, 141
- Modal images, 52, 104 ff., 142 ff.
- Moore, G. E., 257 n.
- Moralistic judgments, 277
- Morals, 5; literature as tracts on, 36, 125, 140; relativity of, 153 f., 166, 174-186; science and, 191-213
- Moving pictures, 106, 122, 214
- Murder, 175
- Mutiny on the Bounty*, Charles B. Nordhoff and James N. Hall, 47, 243
- Mysticism, 176
- Nationalism, 184 f., 196
- Needham, G. B., *Pamela's Daughters*, 226 n.
- Neff, Wanda Fraiken, *Victorian Working Women*, 226 n.
- Negro, attitude toward, 227
- Newman, John Henry, 85
- Newspapers, 106, 122
- Nexø, Martin A., *Pelle the Conqueror*, 315
- Normality, concern about, 98, 239-246; relativity of, 176-186
- Norris, Frank, *The Octopus*, 110
- Novel, effect of the, 214 ff.; French, 308, 311, 314 ff.; German, 308; history of the, 6, 74; Russian, 308
- Objectivity in teaching, 15 f., 152 f.; achieved through literature, 50 f.; social action and, 207-213
- Obsolescent images of behavior in literature, 27-29, 260 ff., 315
- Oedipus fixation, 165, 174, 246 f.
- Ogden, C. K., *Meaning of Meaning*, 257 n.
- O'Neill, Eugene, 241
- Parents, relation to students, 93 f., 100 f., 111 f., 122, 142 f., 151, 203 f., 246 f., 259
- Parnell, Thomas, 304
- Pater, Walter, *Wordsworth*, 299
- Patriotism, 184 f., 196
- Peirce, C. S., 154 f., 163 n., 236

- Personality, analysis of effect of literature on, 232-264; clash of, 74, 140, 190 f.; development of, studied in literature, 290-292, 312-318; development of ability to understand needs of others, 214-222; deviant or eccentric, 181 f.; influence of classic and contemporary literature on, 255-263; integrated, 123 f., 152 f., 270; literature an agency for transmitting cultural pattern, 222-227; literature an aid to objectivity toward one's own, 237 f.; literature an instrument of "ideal experimentation," 236 f.; literature opens up possible alternatives to customary ways, 227-232; release from neurotic fears, 238-246; socially patterned, 34, 104 f., 112 f., 140 f., 170 f., 176 f.; theories in literature about, 10 ff., 25 f.
 Philosophy, of art, 39 f.; of society, 3, 141, 149-213
 Physics, 163
 Plant, James S., *Personality and the Cultural Pattern*, 165 n.
 Poe, Edgar Allan, 120 f.; *The Pit and the Pendulum*, 134
 Polygamy, 105
 Pope, Alexander, tradition of, 305
 Pragmatic point of view, 3 f., 132, 154 ff., 191-213
 Prejudice, race, 277-279
 Progress, social, 220 ff.
 Prometheus myth, 244
 Property, 175, 187 f.
 Proust, Marcel, *Remembrance of Things Past*, 6
 Pruette, Lorine, *Society and Family Life*, 102 n.
 Psychoanalysis, in literary criticism, 13 f., 86 f.; jargon of, 165 f.; personality pattern and, 181 f., 188, 197; through literature, 238-249
 Psychology, literary interpretation and, 11 ff., 25 f., 140 f., 238 f.; human nature and, 18 f., 86 f.; jargon of, 165 f.; schools of, 165-168, 188; social, 197; voluntaristic, 19 f., 169-174
 Pulp literature, 75, 120 f., 249-254
 Pupin, Michael, 240
 Race, attitudes toward in literature, 14, 169; prejudice on, 184 f., 188, 208, 227, 277-279
 Rationalization, 168
 Reader, classic versus contemporary literature for, 255-264; effect of literature on, *passim*, 214-296; escape literature and the, 249-254; projection of personal problems into literature, 238-249
 Recurrence in art and nature, 158-161
 Reflective thinking, about literary response, 89, 91-93, 266-295; on literary and life experiences parallel, 266 ff.; prelude to action, 267
 Religion, primitive, 174 f.; western, 193, 239 f.
 Renaissance, 73
 Restoration comedy, 69 f., 125, 241, 311
 Richards, I. A., *Meaning of Meaning*, 257 n.; *Practical Criticism*, 77, 113 ff., 120, 123
 Richardson, Samuel, *Pamela*, 139 f., 188, 226, 241
 Roberts, Kenneth, *Northwest Passage*, 24
 Rolland, Romain, *Jean Christophe*, 315
 Rölvaag, Ole, *Giants in the Earth*, 47
 Romanticism, rise of, 304-306
 Roth, Henry, *Call It Sleep*, 111
 Routine procedures, undesirable, 290, 292
 Ruskin, John, 311
 Russell, Bertrand, 257 n.
 Sandburg, Carl, 260
 Santayana, George, *Reason in Art*, 7-8
 Satire, 74

- Scandinavian epics, 308
- Scholarship, literary and social, 10 f.
- Science, method and spirit of, 20, 151-213
- Scientist, 103, 158 ff., 230
- Scott, Walter, *Ivanhoe*, 22, 24, 29, 227, 311; *The Lady of the Lake*, 260
- Sectional influences, 110, 231
- Security, concept of mental, 202-213
- Sex, attitudes toward in different societies, 178 f., 186; education, 253 f.; literature and, 13 f., 25 f., 140, 223 f.; maturity, 97-99
- Shakespeare, William, 109, 140, 145, 260; *Antony and Cleopatra*, 273-276, 290; *As You Like It*, 38; Falstaff, 242; *Hamlet*, 11 f., 22, 51, 132, 135, 139, 244; *King Lear*, 6, 47, 259; *King Richard the Second*, 116; *Macbeth*, 11 f., 313; *Merchant of Venice*, 22, 277; *Othello*, 12 f., 47, 53, 57, 244; *Romeo and Juliet*, 49, 111; *Twelfth Night*, 94
- Shaw, George Bernard, *Devil's Disciple*, 47, 241
- Shelley, Percy Bysshe, 138, 235, 305, 317; "Adonais," 55
- Sheridan, Richard, *The Rivals*, 6
- Short stories, 120 f., 214 ff.
- Sidney, Philip, 38
- Sir Thomas More*, 27
- Skepticism, need for, 19 f., 141 f., 189, 261
- Smith, Adam, *Wealth of Nations*, 157 n.
- Social change, 3 f., 25 f., 102 ff., 150, 189-213, 235 f., 255-264; studied through literature, 303 ff.
- Social forces, as abstractions, 206 f.
- Social sciences, analytic approach of, 9 f.; basic concepts of, 25, 149-213, 290-323; ignorance of, 27 f.; value of, 142 f., 149 ff.
- Social studies, 29 n., 205-213; and literature, 282-288; problems in use of literary materials for, 285-288
- Sociology, 18, 27 f., 47, 189, 193
- Spectator attitude of students, 72
- Spender, Stephen, *The Destructive Element*, 117
- Spengler, Oswald, 166
- Spontaneity, the setting for, 69-90; in nature, 158 ff.
- Stein, Gertrude, 7
- Steinbeck, John, *Of Mice and Men*, 259
- Stern, Bernhard J., *The Family: Past and Present*, 102 n.
- Stevenson, Robert Louis, 120; *Treasure Island*, 254 n.
- Stock responses to literature, 113 f.; birth, 114; childhood, 114, 119; class bias, 117; death, 113 f.; home, 114; love, 114; mother, 114, 122; patriotism, 114; royalty, 116; sectional, 118 f.; success, 121 f.; war, 115
- Stoll, E. E., 13 f.
- Stribling, T. S., *The Forge*, 110
- Student, needs and demands, 3 f.; as a critic, 72-78; as a reader, 32-64; permitting spontaneous reaction of, 78-90
- Sublimation of disapproved impulses, 245 f.
- Suckow, Ruth, *The Folks*, 50
- Supermen, 196
- Survival of the fittest, 166
- Swift, Jonathan, 297
- Teacher, of literature, 4, 5, 61 f.; as psychiatrists, 246-249; choice of books by, 254-264; qualifications of, 29 ff., 149-156, 278-280, 289, 293, 296
- Teaching process, *passim*; outlined, 265 ff.
- Technology, influence of, 25
- Tennyson, Alfred, *Idylls of the King*, 26, 260
- Thackeray, William M., 140, 297; *Vanity Fair*, 141
- Thomson, James, 305
- Tolstoy, Leo, *Anna Karenina*, 93 f., 132; *War and Peace*, 6, 65
- Tradition, exaltation of, 184 f., 189-191; literary, 33 f., 137 f.,

Tradition (*cont.*)

259; need for remolding, 191-213, 255-263; outworn, 28, 107, 110, 124, 150 f., 260 f.; transmission of, 222-227

Tragedy, 41 f., 136 f.

Tribalism, 184 f., 196

Tristan and Iseult, 244

Truth, approximation toward, 155 ff., 161-163

Turner, Joseph M. W., 231

Twain, Mark, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, 309; *Huckleberry Finn*, 9, 12; *Tom Sawyer*, 26

Types, in literature, 276

Typee, Herman Melville, 254 n.

Uncle Tom's Cabin, Harriet Beecher Stowe, 221

Unconscious motives, 18, 140, 188

Understanding, action and, 207-213, 284; instead of judging people, 277; nature of, 69 ff.; 92 ff., 126 f.; 130-136, 149-213, 256-264

Unemployment, 169, 189

Unique, the, in art and nature, 158 ff.

Urban influences, 110, 173

Utter, R. P., *Pamela's Daughters*, 226 n.

Values, social, 3, 142 ff., 152 ff.; of different cultures, 174-186; in a democracy, 191-263

Veblen, Thorstein, *Theory of the Leisure Class*, 226

Victorians, approach to literature, 4, 232-236, 254; attitude toward women, 178

Victorian novels, 16

Virtue, 132, 141

War, 175, 321

Wartons, the, 305

Wealth, concentration of, 175, 187 ff.; emphasis on, 251

Wells, H. G., *Ann Veronica*, 26, 242

Wharton, Edith, *Ethan Frome*, 6, 12, 120

White, Walter W., *Fire in the Flint*, 119

Wilcox, Ella Wheeler, 114

Wilde, Oscar, 36, 231; *The Importance of Being Earnest*, 132

Will to learn, the, 155

Wolfe, Thomas, 242

Wollstonecraft, Mary, 235

Women, emancipation of, 235, 241 f.; position of, 26, 106, 142 ff., 150 f., 178, 185, 209 f., 226 f.

Woodward, Helen, *Three Flights Up*, 286 n.

Woolf, Virginia, 259

Wordsworth, William, 26, 137 f., 305; "The Solitary Reaper," 132; and S. T. Coleridge, *Lyrical Ballads*, 305

Yonge, Charlotte Mary, 36

Youth, among Batciga, 175; among Manus, 175; formation of personality pattern of, 214-264; in Samoa, 97, 175; problems of, 3, 102 ff., 150 f.

Date Due

FEB 21	RETURN	Returned DEC 14 '77
		Returned JAN 25 '78
OCT 28	RETURN	DUE Educ APR 8 '78
		APR - 8 RETURN
		DUE Educ JUL 24 '78
		RETURNED JUL 14 '78
APR 6	RETURN	OCT 5 RETURN
		APR 16 RETURN
		NOV - 5 1979 RETURN
		RETURN FEB 5 '80
DEC 2	RETURN	OCT 2 RETURN
OCT - 4	RETURN	

Not on P.O. on reserve shelf

PN 59 R82 1938
ROSENBLATT LOUISE M LOUISE
MICHELLE
LITERATURE AS EXPLORATION
39885591 EDUC



000020681094

PN 59 R82 1938
Rosenblatt, Louise M. (Louise
Michelle)
Literature as exploration,
39885591 EDUC

1 M.

Education Library

94170

